The appropriation of biblical and liturgical language in the poetry of Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis.

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The Appropriation of Biblical and Liturgical Language in the Poetry of Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an intertextual study consisting largely of close readings of selected poems, or extracts from long poems, by Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis against Biblical and liturgical source texts to which they allude. It seeks to demonstrate that the relationship of each of these poets to the sacred texts of Orthodoxy is essentially appropriative, and thus far less harmonious than has usually been supposed.

A General Introduction defines the terms of reference, discusses 'Christian poetry' as something distinct from the projects of these three poets, and relates appropriation to Harold Bloom's concept of 'transumption'.

One long chapter is devoted to each poet. That on Palamas discloses a tendency to focus on the Virgin to the near-exclusion of Christ, theological contentiousness, eroticization and aestheticization of sacred personae, occasional syncretism (but not where it has been most looked for, in the *Φλογέρα*), and indications of the displacement of Christ by the poetic ego.

Sikelianos' concept of the 'Fifth Gospel' is seen as indicative of the ambition to rewrite the 'Myth' of Christianity, paganizing, Hellenizing and eroticizing it in the process. While syncretism is Sikelianos' most pervasive appropriative strategy (evident particularly in the fusion of Christ and Dionysus), the displacement of Christ by the poet is seen to be more developed than in Palamas.

In Elytis' *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* — remarkable for the extensive appropriations not only of Christian language but also of liturgical structures and metrics, in a poem which scarcely deals directly with Christianity at all— the displacement of God or Christ by the narrator is found to be the principal result of the appropriations.

A General Conclusion emphasizes the progression from Palamas through Sikelianos to Elytis, particularly in the increasing attribution to the poet of God-like qualities and functions through appropriations of Biblical and liturgical language.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTINUED . . . .

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I was first admitted to King's College London as a student in 1992, after a twenty-six-year break from academic studies, I had no thought of writing a doctoral thesis; and, being financially prepared for only three years of study, I certainly did not imagine that I would still be at KCL in 1999. That I have had the good fortune to spend seven years as a student at KCL, and to complete this thesis, I owe to the material support of various bodies, primarily the British Academy, and the moral support and encouragement of many individuals.

I am very grateful to the British Academy for a Three-Year Postgraduate Studentship (1994-97) which allowed me to carry out my research on a full-time basis; and to the Greek Government for a Scholarship which enabled me to pursue my researches in the libraries of Athens during the first five months of 1996. The British Academy also covered my travel expenses in connection both with my stay in Athens and a visit to New York to present a paper at the Byzantine Studies Conference in 1995. I am grateful to the Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at KCL for other travel expenses and conference fees.

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In my first two years at KCL my studies included undergraduate courses in the Department of Classics and an MA course in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking by name the members of those departments and of the Department of Byzantine and of Modern Greek Studies whose teaching, or support and encouragement, or both, have made my seven years at KCL such a stimulating and rewarding experience: in Classics, Mr John Muir, Prof. Michael Silk, Mr Bernard Gredley; in Theology, Dr Graham Gould; in Byzantine and Modern Greek, Prof. Averil

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I would like to record my appreciation of the unfailing courtesy, patience and helpfulness of the KCL library staff, and to thank in particular Ms Evelyn Cornell, the Readers' Adviser for Classics and Modern Greek.

My greatest debt of gratitude is to my supervisor, Dr David Ricks. It is not, I imagine, always an easy task to supervise a student significantly older than oneself. Needless to say, though, I am very much his junior in literary studies and have benefited enormously from his guidance. Dr Ricks has been a demanding supervisor, not so much overtly as through the example of his own exacting standards of scholarship and clarity in writing. I have greatly appreciated the very considerable amount of time he has devoted to the meticulous scrutiny of many successive drafts of the various parts of this thesis (as well as of much other material now excluded). I am grateful, too, for his patience and understanding when, particularly in the later stages, my progress was much slower than he would have liked.

Anthony Hirst
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BIBLICAL AND LITURGICAL TEXTS:

A NOTE ON EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

Biblical quotations in English are mainly from the *Revised Standard Version (RSV)*. Occasionally the *Authorized Version (AV)* is used, either where the *RSV* is more remote from the Greek, or where phrases from the *AV* are so well known that the alternatives in the *RSV* sound odd. Use of the *AV* is always explicitly noted, as are my own translations.

Translations of all other texts (liturgical, poetic, critical) are my own unless otherwise stated.

Biblical quotations in Greek are from an edition of the Greek Bible sanctioned by the Greek Orthodox hierarchy: *Ἡ Ἁγία Γραφή· ἡ Παλαιὰ Διαθήκη κατὰ τοὺς Ἑβδομήκοντα· ἡ Καινὴ Διαθήκη*, 13th edition, published by Ἀδελφότης Θεολόγων ἡ «Ζωή» (Athens, 1994). The text is not always based on the best manuscript traditions and differs in many places from modern critical editions of the Septuagint and the New Testament. However, it presents the Biblical texts in the form in which they are most likely to have been familiar to Greek poets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Where the chapter and verse numbers of the Septuagint differ from those of the *RSV*, I have given both, with the *RSV* numbers in brackets.

There are so many editions of Greek liturgical texts that it seemed unhelpful to give page references. Instead I have described as precisely as possible the position of each extract quoted in the service to which it belongs. Unless some other volume is indicated, I have used the text of the *Μέγας Ἱερὸς Συνέκδημος τοῦ Ὀρθοδόξου Χριστιανοῦ*, published by Φῶς (Athens, no date).

I have followed the partially modernized orthography of these editions of the Greek Bible and the *Synekdemos*, except for restoring breathings over initial *rho*.

In all other quotations in Greek I have, unless otherwise stated, followed the orthography of the original publication, except for correcting obvious typographical errors.

The titles and numbering of the kontakia of Romanos are those of the edition of Paul Maas and C.A. Trypanis (1963), *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica: Cantica Genuina*, and the text of that edition is used for all quotations from Romanos.

Preface

'Greek the language they gave me [. . .]. My only care my language on Homer's shores.' Thus Elytis, writing in the 1950s, expresses his sense of belonging to a poetic tradition stretching back to Homer. But Homer is not the only stage, or strand, of that tradition which he acknowledges: 'My only care my language with the very first Glory Be to Thee [. . .] with the first words of the Hymn.'[1] With the 'Glory Be' Elytis conjures up the world of Byzantine Christianity and its rich store of liturgical poetry; and with the 'first words of the Hymn' alludes to the first great poet of modern Greece, Dionysios Solomos.[2]

Not only in terms of poetry, but also on a broader cultural front, we may speak, following Toynbee, of the ancient polytheistic culture and the Christian culture of Byzantium as two distinct heritages. While the continuity between Byzantium and the Orthodox church of today is manifest, the thread that links Elytis to Homer is stretched rather thin across the fifteen centuries of Byzantine and Ottoman rule; and awareness of the classical tradition would not be such an important factor in modern Greek culture had it not been deliberately fostered in the decades following the establishment of the Greek state.[3]

In the study of modern Greek literature a disproportionate amount of attention has been devoted to its relation to the classical tradition, often at the expense of the Byzantine or Christian elements. This is in part, no doubt, precisely because the link with ancient Greece has been consciously

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[1] Elytis 1980: 28, as translated in Keeley & Savidis 1980: 32.

[2] See p.301 below.

[3] Compare Toynbee 1981: 155.

cultivated, while Orthodoxy is a more natural and less self-conscious aspect of modern Greek culture. The Christian elements have not, of course, been entirely ignored, but they have, generally, been treated as unproblematic, and there is, in consequence, a dearth of critical analysis of this aspect of the literature. There have been studies of the religious views of poets, using the poetry for the purpose of illustration, but without much attention to textual context;[4] and there have been source studies linking passages in the poetry with passages from Biblical and liturgical texts.[5] Whether intentionally or not, such source studies tend to suggest the Orthodox Christian allegiance of the poets: they perhaps assume, and certainly imply, a harmonious relation between the poetry and its Christian sources.

The uncritical approach to the Christian elements in modern Greek literature is, surely, related to the widespread assumption that to be Greek is to be Orthodox and, thus, to be a Greek poet is to be an Orthodox poet.[6] Orthodoxy has long been, and remains, a potent ingredient in Greek nationalism. The somewhat arbitrary retrospective determination that the Revolution began on the Feast of the Annunciation (25 March) 1821 is indicative of the way in which nationalism has appropriated religion. From Solomos' *Hymn to Liberty* (1823) and the inception of the Greek state, poetry has been an important locus of the fusion of Christianity and nationalism. The substitution of Ἑλλάς for Μαρία in Valaoritis' rewriting of the Annunciation in «Εὐαγγελισμός— Ἑλληνισμός»

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[4] E.g. Balanos 1943 and Moschos 1993 on Palamas; Xydis 1973: 207-29 on Sikelianos; Papachristou-Panou 1980 and Proïmou-Erinaki 1997 on Elytis.

[5] E.g. Xydis 1950 on the whole range of Palamas' poetry; Kasinis 1980: 243-322 and Galani 1989, each devoted to a single major work, by Palamas and Elytis respectively. There have been no systematic studies of Sikelianos' Christian sources (but see p.145 below). Phylaktou's major source study of Sikelianos' poetry (1990) is concerned almost exclusively with ancient Greek sources.

[6] Tertsetis and Papatsonis (both Roman Catholics) and Yoseph Eliya (Jewish) are rare exceptions.

(1864) is one of the grosser examples.[7]

The pervasive atmosphere of religious nationalism has hardly been conducive to a level-headed appraisal of the Christian elements in literature, and particularly in the works of those regarded as national poets, pre-eminently Solomos, but also Kalvos, Valaoritis, Palamas and Sikelianos, and more recently Elytis. National poets are assumed to reflect the national ideology, including Orthodox Christianity, and there is a widespread tendency among critics to overlook or play down— sometimes an evident refusal to see— those elements in their work which are incompatible with, or challenge, Christian beliefs. Kleon Paraschos' insistence that there is no real Christianity in modern Greek poetry[8] goes against the grain of both popular and critical response to Greece's national poets.

In the cases of the three poets with which this thesis is concerned— Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis— there is no question about their national preoccupations, but their attitudes to Christianity are, to put it mildly, highly unorthodox. This unorthodoxy, not to mention actual opposition to at least certain aspects of Christianity, is often ignored. Indeed there have been a number of attempts to enlist their work, and that of other poets whose Christian allegiance is questionable, in support of Christianity. Poulis' characterization of Cavafy's erotic poetry as dramatizing 'the internal struggle against sin', indicates the absurd limits to which such attempts may be pressed.[9] Inevitably, it is mainly critics with strong religious interests and convictions who write about the religious views of poets; and unless they write to condemn a poet's irreligion (a most unlikely strategy with those recognized as national poets) they emphasize whatever

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[7] The angel says, μὴ φοβοῦ, χαῖρε, Παρθένε, χαῖρε! / Ὁ Κύριός μου εἶναι μὲ σέ, Ἑλλάς, ἀνάστα, χαῖρε! (Valaoritis 1981: 75). Compare Luke 1.28-30.

[8] See p.24.

[9] Poulis 1989: 31.

positive religious attitudes they find in the poetry.[10] It is only a poet like Embeirikos who can escape co-option to the Christian cause. His use of Christian language in erotic, even pornographic, contexts, especially in the novel *Ὁ Μέγας Ἀνατολικός*,[11] leaves his impiety in no doubt. While Embeirikos' underlying purpose is serious, it is palpably antagonistic to Christianity.

The equation of nationalism and Christianity has influenced not only critics but also poets themselves, making them at times somewhat circumspect in expressing their attitudes to Christianity. Elytis' remark that he is 'not a Christian in the accepted sense' is guardedly ambiguous, leaving open the possibility that he is a Christian in some other sense.[12] Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis, in their different ways, all make use of Christian ideas or Christian language in their own alternative religious perspectives; and, whatever their personal misgivings, they all accept Christianity, if in no other way, as an integral part of Greek life. It is their perhaps deliberate ambivalence that leaves their work open to Christian misreading.

I approach the religious views of these three poets only indirectly, through the use they make of Christian language; and I find this use to be predominantly appropriative. By that I mean that they take elements of Biblical and liturgical texts and transpose them into poetic contexts which are, in various ways, at odds with Christian belief and morality.[13]

Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis form a natural triumvirate. They are all in the front rank of modern Greek poets; and among poets of the front rank these are the three in whose work the poetic ego is most consistently foregrounded. This last feature proves in each case to be associated with, and articulated through, appropriations of Christian language. All three

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[10] This is true of all but the last of the works cited on p.9 n.4.

[11] Embeirikos 1990-92.

[12] Kechagioglou 1995: 36.

[13] On appropriation see further pp.16-17, 33-4.

poets produced important long poems that engage with Christian language (Elytis' *magnum opus*, *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί*, is the only work of his which I discuss); and, arguably, their work offers the most extensive and enterprising examples of the appropriation of Biblical and liturgical language in modern Greek poetry.

Through my detailed examination of the ways in which these three major Greek poets use Christian language in a selection of poems or parts of longer poems, I aim to go beyond the typically cursory treatment of the Christian material in poetry which is content to note superficial correspondences. In so doing, I hope to show that the poetry of Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis cannot properly be reconciled with Christian belief, and, further, that it does not support the simplistic equation of Greekness and Orthodoxy, but engages with Christianity as a highly ambivalent part of the Greek national heritage.

1

General Introduction

1.1 Terms of reference

This thesis is an investigation of a particular kind of relationship between one set of Greek texts and another: it examines the appropriation of the language of the Greek Bible and the liturgy of the Greek Orthodox Church in selected poems of Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis.

I begin by defining terms, considering first certain aspects of intertextuality, such as 'allusion', 'source' and 'influence', in order to arrive at a definition of 'appropriation'. I use the term 'intertextuality' to indicate the totality of possible relations between written texts.[1] The use of the term in a wider context still, where almost anything may be described as a 'text', is not entirely helpful, since it blurs the distinction between the textual and non-textual, a distinction which remains, I believe, significant, especially when dealing with ancient religious texts which have been accorded a highly privileged status within the culture that embraces them and whose actual words are regarded as sacrosanct, as Ἁγία Γραφή.

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[1] In line with the following authoritative (but, in the first case, vacuous) definitions: 'Intertextuality refers to those conditions of textuality which affect and describe the relations between texts' (*New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*: 620); 'intertextuality. [. . .] the need for one text to be read in the light of its allusions to and differences from the content or structure of other texts; the allusive relationship between esp. literary texts' (*Oxford English Dictionary: Additions Series*, 3: 132).

Allusion, as it is usually understood, also bridges the gap between the textual and non-textual, but 'allusion', unlike 'intertextuality', is not an exclusively technical term, and its range of meaning reflects ordinary usage where we often allude to facts without having in mind any specific text (or any texts at all) in which such facts are recorded.

The *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* defines allusion in poetry as 'a poet's deliberate incorporation of identifiable elements from other sources, preceding or contemporaneous, textual or extratextual'. This appears to confuse means with end, focusing on incorporation (the means by which allusion is effected) rather than on allusion (an authorial act) itself. We usually speak of alluding *to* a text, fact or event. Allusion is, then, an act of reference.

Leaving aside non-textual allusions, we may say that an allusion is a type of indirect reference by one text to another which is effected through the incorporation in the one text of elements of the other. The indirectness of an illusion distinguishes it from citation. A text which explicitly declares its relation to another named text is not alluding. Conversely, where allusion does occur, there will be no explicit reference and the presence of an allusion may be a matter for the reader's judgement. In this thesis I shall apply 'allusion' (and its cognate verb) to passages in poetry where I judge the author to be directing (in most cases consciously and deliberately) the reader's attention to some fact, image or idea embodied in another text or texts. Observable similarity between one text and another is not proof of allusion, except where it is very close and very extensive. Similarities may be fortuitous, or may arise from the later author's unwitting use of, or approximation to, the language of an earlier text which has been retained in the memory, but whose otherness the author is not conscious of at the time of writing. We might call such instances unconscious allusion, and they can certainly produce significant intertextual relationships.

It will be useful to distinguish some of the ways in which elements of

one text may be incorporated into another. The simplest form of incorporation is quotation, the incorporation of verbal elements without alteration. In formal verse, owing to the exigencies of metre and rhyme, quotation is usually restricted to short phrases. Free verse offers greater opportunities, but extended verbatim quotations are rare in any kind of poetry,[2] except as epigraphs, which, though a part of the poetic text, are not integrated into the poetry. Minor modifications of the words of the source, such as changes in word order, or changes in the case of nouns and adjectives or in the person, tense, mood and voice of verbs, may be all that is required to adapt to metrical requirements or a new syntactical context, but these are moves away from quotation in the direction of paraphrase. Even such minor changes may result in significant shifts in meaning. In the case of elements from Biblical and liturgical texts incorporated into modern Greek poems, changes may be dictated by the desire to modernize the language. In other cases, where entirely distinct languages are involved, the language of the source may be translated into the language of the poem.

Paraphrase may involve more extensive changes, such as substitution of synonyms, radical rephrasing, condensation or amplification, shading off into an area where one cannot be sure that correspondences between the two texts are anything more than coincidental. There are, on the other hand, instances, where, while verbal connections are too remote to speak of paraphrase, the subject matter indicates with near certainty the poet's awareness of a specific earlier text.

It is not only the words (verbatim or modified) of a text which may be incorporated in another, but also the ways in which words are organized: a later text may use structural devices, including metre and rhyme scheme, peculiar to an earlier text, in conjunction with, or entirely independently of, verbal similarities.

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[2] See p.167 for one example.

The fact that a text incorporates elements of an earlier text tells us, by itself, very little about the relation between the two texts, other than that the earlier serves as a source for the later. 'Source' describes one way in which an earlier text may be related to a later. There are others, of which the most obvious is 'influence'. C.S. Lewis neatly encapsulates the difference between the two in saying that 'a Source gives us things to write about; an Influence prompts us to write in a certain way'. Lewis goes on to discuss influence mainly in terms of style (with illustrations drawn from English literature).[3] But influence is not only a matter of style; the assertion of influence may imply that the stance of the later text reflects the stance of the earlier, that there is a harmony of ideas between the two texts. Clearly, though, this is not the case with all allusions. A text may be reacting against the earlier text to which it alludes and transposing elements of that text into a new context which is not in harmony with, and may be antagonistic to, the source. It is in such cases that one can speak of appropriation. In the terms of the source text an appropriation is a misuse of the incorporated elements, by which the later text may question the truth or challenge the authority of the source.

One would hardly think of appropriation in considering the relation of the Christmas carol 'While shepherds watch'd' to the Nativity narratives in Luke. The carol is a close paraphrase of the *AV* of Luke 2.8-14, with verbatim quotation of short phrases and very little amplification. Most importantly, the carol is entirely in sympathy with its source: both recount a miraculous event with the directness of unquestioning belief. But Sikelianos' allusion to Luke's 'shepherds' and 'heavenly host' and his incorporation of Romanos' phrase, παιδίον νέον, ὁ πρὸ αἰώνων θεός, slightly modified, into a poem in which the newborn infant is hailed as 'my Dionysus and my Christ' constitutes appropriation, since the elements of

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[3] Lewis 1962: 35-41, 35.

Luke and Romanos are transposed into a context whose syncretism is at variance with the Christian orthodoxy of the sources.[4]

The fusion of Christianity and paganism is one of the principal contexts of appropriation of Biblical and liturgical language in Sikelianos. Others are the appropriation to the speaker in a poem of words or images which in their original context refer to Christ, and (often related to the syncretism) the reshaping of Scriptural incidents or ideas through highly selective use or deliberate distortion of source material. All three strategies are found— though, with the exception of the last, in less developed form— in Palamas; while in Elytis' *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* it is appropriation to the speaker (or other modern and secular personae) of divine words and attributes which predominates, to the near-exclusion of the other two strategies.

The choice of Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis has already been explained in the Preface in terms of their pre-eminence, their persistent foregrounding of the poetic ego, and their extensive appropriation of Biblical and liturgical language. A comprehensive survey of the relation between the poetry of any *one* of these poets and Biblical and liturgical texts would stretch the space limits of a doctoral thesis. In attempting to deal with the work of all three, I have had to be selective not only among works which do make use of Biblical and liturgical language, but also, in the case of longer works, within those works.

It remains to define, and briefly survey, the range of Biblical and liturgical texts in which I have sought the sources of the Christian language appropriated by the three selected poets.

The Bible is of central importance to Christians of all denominations, but the form in which they know it is language-specific, and in some cases specific to a particular denomination within a linguistic community. The

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[4] See p.244-5 n.271.

vast majority of Greeks are at least nominally Orthodox and know the Bible in the form in which it is used in the Greek Orthodox Church. The twentieth century has seen a move away from archaic or even heightened language in Bible translation and public worship, but the Orthodox Church of Greece is an exception to this general trend. While Greek Orthodox communities outside Greece are making increasing use of national vernaculars (chiefly English) in their worship, there is little demand in Greece for the modernization of ecclesiastical language. Most Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians continue to hear the New Testament (hereafter 'NT') read in their churches in the original *Koine* Greek, and the Old Testament (hereafter 'OT') in a Greek translation, the Septuagint, which antedates Christianity.[5] In considering the relation of modern Greek literature to Christian language it is, perhaps more than with many other national literatures, essential to consider the Bible and liturgical texts together. Among the Orthodox (as among Catholics), Bible reading has never become the widespread activity it has been among Protestants ever since vernacular translations became widely available in the sixteenth century. Generally speaking, Greeks tend to know the Bible through the liturgy, and may have no clear sense of the boundary between the Biblical elements incorporated into the liturgical texts and post-Biblical liturgical material.[6]

The Greek Orthodox Church has an incomparably rich store of liturgical texts. Its service books have been little changed since the mid-

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[5] In the main the work of Jewish scholars in Alexandria in the third–second centuries BC, with additions in the first century BC or even later.

[6] There is a difference in register, since the Greek of the Byzantine liturgical texts is generally more Atticizing than that of the NT or the Septuagint; and there are differences between the theology of the NT and the developed post-Biblical theology of the Ecumenical Councils reflected in liturgical texts, particularly as regards the Trinity, the Person of Christ and the role of the Virgin Mary. It is probably only a minority of worshippers, however, who are sensitive to these differences.

Byzantine period. Their present state represents a fusion of the ceremonies developed in the imperial 'Great Church' of 'Αγία Σοφία in Constantinople with monastic rites. The most important service is the Liturgy (the equivalent of the western Mass, Eucharist, Holy Communion etc.) which is celebrated every Sunday and on major feast days in most churches, daily in cathedrals and monasteries.[7] There are services for the various 'Hours' of the day. Of these the most important are Esperinos (Vespers) and Orthros (Matins) which are sung in most churches on Saturday evening and immediately before the Liturgy on Sunday morning repectively, and daily in monasteries along with the services of the First, Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours. There is also a late evening service called 'Απόδειπνον, the equivalent of western Compline. The greater part of the text of each of these services is fixed, but some elements vary according to the seasons and festivals of the ecclesiastical calendar. A number of service books are devoted to these variants and additions to the regular services. The Triodion contains the variants and special services for various days in Lent and Holy Week; the Pentekostarion, variants for the period from Easter to the Sunday after Pentecost; and the many volumes of the Menologion contain the variants for saints' days and other fixed festivals throughout the year and include Synaxarial readings (extracts from the 'Lives' of saints). There are also, of course, forms of service for Baptism, Marriage and the other sacraments.

Few Greeks will be familiar with more than a relatively small portion of the totality of the language of Orthodox worship. Most familiar will be the services which are celebrated regularly in churches (Vespers, Orthros and the Liturgy), the ceremonies of Baptism and Marriage and the

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[7] In this thesis 'Liturgy' (with capital L) always refers to this service; 'liturgy' (without initial capital) is used to denote the ceremonies of the Church in general, and the adjective 'liturgical' invariably has this wider reference.

services for those days when large numbers of people attend church (notably Christmas, Good Friday and Easter). Of particular importance and popularity is the Service of the Akathistos Hymn, sung on Friday evenings in Lent.

To the Greek Bible and the current service books of the Greek Orthodox Church I must add two other categories of texts. The first consists of the apocryphal books associated with the NT. (All the books known collectively in the West as the OT Apocrypha are integral parts of the Septuagint.) Among the NT Apocrypha the Protevangelium Iacobi, or Book of James, has a special place in the Orthodox Church, being the principal source of the legends of the early life of the Virgin— a common theme for cycles of mosaics and wall paintings in Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches— and, indeed, a principal source for a major poem by Sikelianos (see §3.5).

The second additional category consists of works of liturgical poetry which are not part of current Orthodox services, and in particular the kontakia of the sixth-century hymnographer, Romanos.[8] According to Trypanis the kontakion is 'the one and only great original achievement of Byzantine literature',[9] and the kontakia of Romanos have had a particular appeal for modern Greek poets, and especially for Elytis.[10] Once a prominent feature of Orthros (at least in Ἁγία Σοφία and other large

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[8] The kontakion blends narration, prayer and preaching. It is a stanzaic form in which the stanzas are often quite long. Usually called *oikoi* (or strophae), the stanzas are divided into cola which correspond to the smallest sense units (typically short phrases). Cola are grouped into larger sense units, lines and periods. Each colon has a metrical identity determined by the number of syllables and the positions of principal stress accents. The sequence and grouping of cola in the first *oikos* determines an intricate metrical structure which is repeated in all succeeding *oikoi*. The first *oikos* is preceded by a *prooimion* (or *koukoulion*) with a different metrical pattern.

[9] Maas & Trypanis 1963: xiv.

[10] See p.270 n.6.

churches) the kontakion was displaced, in the course of the seventh and eighth centuries, by the Canon, a form developed within the monastic tradition.[11] The Akathistos Hymn is the only kontakion which has remained in liturgical use in its entirety. Otherwise, only the *prooimion* (called *kontakion* in liturgical rubrics) and the first *oikos* of certain kontakia survive in liturgical use as species of antiphon sung between the sixth and seventh odes of the canon in Orthros. However, the kontakia of Romanos have always been valued and preserved by the Orthodox Church, and they have become more widely known since the late nineteenth century through many scholarly and popular publications, ranging from single kontakia to two near-complete editions[12] and one complete one.[13]

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[11] Canons generally lack the narrative and didactic elements found in kontakia. A canon is divided into nine odes related to the Nine Biblical Odes. Each ode of a canon is constructed on the same metrical principles as a kontakion, but the repeated syllabic and accentual pattern is usually much shorter, closer in length to a verse of Scripture than to the *oikos* of a typical kontakion.

[12] Tomadakis 1952-61; Grosdidier de Matons 1964-81.

[13] Maas & Trypanis 1963 and 1970.

1.2 Christian poetry

Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis are, in a very broad sense, all religious poets. That is to say, their poetry is informed by a high seriousness (which sometimes becomes sententious) and frequently deals with what most people think of as religious issues: immortality, transcendence and divinity. Concepts of 'spirit' or 'soul' as the essence of the human being, and of the 'sacred' as an aspect of experience, are prominent in their work. Of none of them, however, could one say that their poetic ideas are firmly rooted in Orthodox, or indeed orthodox, Christianity. Their religion, if that is an appropriate word, is of their own making, though, for Sikelianos at least, it embraces Christian elements. They are religious poets but they do not write Christian poetry, in any narrowly defined sense.

For Donald Davie, prefacing his *New Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, 'Christian poetry' is

> poetry that appeals [. . .] to some one or more of the distinctive doctrines of the Christian church: to Incarnation pre-eminently, to Redemption, Judgement, the Holy Trinity, the Fall.

Note that Davie speaks of poetry that 'appeals'— and not simply 'refers'— to Christian doctrine. The notion of appeal already seems to require the Christian affiliation of the poet. Although Davie concedes that the appeal to doctrine may be rebellious or sardonic in spirit, he is thinking only of rebellion which remains within the Christian tradition,[14] as the elaboration of his definition makes clear. Reminding us that Christian faith rests not

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[14] Helen Gardner, on the other hand, beginning with a definition of 'religious poetry' as 'poetry that treats of revelation and man's response to revelation', extends it, by a rather specious argument, to include any poetry which refers to revelation irrespective of its commitment or perspective: 'Since "No" is a response as well as "Yes", we can include as religious poems some poems in which the response is rejection of the Christian revelation and doubt of its truth' (1983: 135).

only 'on a body of doctrine' but also 'on a narrative', he extends his definition of Christian poetry to include its relation to the Bible, and concludes that

> it is not enough to say that a poem, to be a Christian poem, must have at its core something either doctrinal or scriptural; it must treat of scripture to show scripture embodies doctrine, and of doctrine to show how it has scriptural authority.[15]

Christian poetry in Davie's sense is limited both as to its subject matter and as to the attitudes it may express. It is the kind of poetry Eliot had in mind when he said that

> for the great majority of people who love poetry '*religious* poetry' is a variety of *minor* poetry: the religious poet is not a poet who is treating the whole subject matter of poetry in a religious spirit, but a poet who is dealing with a confined part of this subject matter: who is leaving out what men consider their major passions.[16]

When Eliot wrote this in 1935, in the essay 'Religion and Literature', he probably considered himself to be a religious poet in the broader sense of 'a poet who is treating the whole subject matter of poetry in a religious spirit'. In this sense Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis could be said to be religious poets, though not Christian poets— and certainly none of their work would pass Davie's rigorous tests.

Issues very similar to those raised by Davie and Eliot occupied Andreas Keramidas in 1939, in the 'Introductory and Critical Note' to his *Νεοελληνικὴ θρησκευτικὴ ἀνθολογία*. Keramidas asks what position modern Greek poets have taken in relation to religion, and whether deep Christian religiousness is to be found in their works.[17] He quotes, from

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[15] Davie 1981: xx-xxi.

[16] Eliot 1951: 390 (emphases in the original).

[17] Keramidas 1939: θ'.

articles published a few years earlier, two diametrically opposed answers. According to Kouïmoutsopoulos, 'the noblest and most illustrious representatives of modern Greek poetry experienced fully in their sensitive souls the deepest emotions of religion and were drawn to and inspired by the purity and other-worldliness of the noblest Christian ideals',[18] while Kleon Paraschos insists that 'Christianity inspired modern Greek poets from Solomos to Karyotakis only to a very small extent'. 'In very few of them', he adds, 'perhaps in none, will you find true Christian inspiration.'[19]

What we have here is not so much a disagreement about the nature or content of Greek poetry, as a disagreement about the nature of Christian religion. Kouïmoutsopoulos' effusive language and particularly the phrase, 'the purity and otherworldliness of the noblest Christian ideals', betrays a rather intellectualized and unfocused conception of Christianity, a Christianity divorced from its historical roots and from doctrine. For Paraschos, by contrast, Christianity means 'the tremendous event which is the birth of Christ, and, more broadly, his whole life, his whole teaching together with the shape which the Apostles and the Doctors of Christendom have given to it'.[20]

Had Paraschos made an anthology of Christian poetry in Modern Greek, he would clearly have employed criteria similar to those of Davie, but the result would have been a very slim volume. He offers two explanations for the fact, as he sees it, that 'from Solomos to the present [1934] Christianity has failed to penetrate deeply into modern Greek poetry'. The first is that 'our race does not accept [Christianity]', and the second that 'modern Greek poetry has flourished in the period of the death-struggle of Christianity'.[21] With the former, and highly provocative,

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18 Kouïmoutsopoulos 1935, quoted in Keramidas 1939: θ'.

19 Paraschos 1934: 74.

20 Paraschos 1934: 74.

21 Paraschos 1934: 77.

explanation Paraschos probably alludes, *inter alia*, to the survival of pagan elements in the Greek folk tradition. With the latter he refers to the intellectual challenge faced by Christianity world-wide from the late nineteenth century onwards, and sees the baleful influence of 'modern, foreign' ideas on Greek poetry as first manifested in the work of Palamas and Cavafy.[22]

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[22] Paraschos 1934: 75.

1.3 Christianity and Literature

'Christian poetry', as defined by Paraschos or Davie, exemplifies only one of many possible relationships between literature and Christianity. Eliot suggests some others when he distinguishes three stages in the secularization of the English novel:

> In the first, the novel took the Faith, in its contemporary version, for granted, and omitted it from its picture of life. [. . .] In the second, it doubted, worried about, or contested the Faith. [. . .] the third phase [. . .] is the phase of those who have never heard the Christian Faith spoken of as anything but an anachronism.[23]

With certain modifications this rough schema can be applied to the changing relationship of Greek poetry to Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While it could hardly be said that Solomos and Kalvos omit Christianity from their picture of life, they (and poets of the mid-nineteenth century, such as Valaoritis, Vasiliadis and Markoras) do take it for granted, in the sense that issues of faith are rarely foregrounded in their poetry.[24] For them the Christian faith is an integral part of the life of Greeks, but has not yet become, despite the unorthodox views some of them held, an issue which needs to be confronted.

The phase of doubt, anxiety and contention is represented in Greek poetry above all by Palamas, though the nature of his doubt (doubt must start from belief) has been misunderstood. Sikelianos seems untouched by doubt but contests the Christian faith by denying its supremacy, in his attempt to integrate Christian 'myth' (itself a contentious term in this context) into a syncretistic mythology whose chief ingredients are the pagan myths of ancient Greece. In Varnalis' *Τὸ φῶς πού καίει* (1922),

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[23] Eliot 1951: 392.

[24] Solomos' «Ὁ Λάμπρος» is an important exception (see p.320 n.110).

the satirical dialogue involving both Jesus and Prometheus is an altogether more superficial version of the contest with Christian faith.[25] Its very light-heartedness suggests that in Varnalis we are already approaching the third stage in which the Christian Faith no longer needs to be taken seriously (though the rest of the poem engages more sympathetically with Christian material).

One could hardly speak, even today, in a Greek context of 'those who have never heard the Christian Faith spoken of as anything but an anachronism'. Orthodoxy is still closely tied to notions of national identity and very few Greeks divorce themselves entirely from it. The Greek Orthodox Church is a conservative institution (its linguistic conservatism has already been noted),[26] and could be described as a living anachronism, supported and fostered in part precisely because of its archaic nature and its remoteness from daily life.

Before the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922, political and ecclesiastical ambitions had, for more than half a century, been united in the Μεγάλη Ἰδέα. Greeks within and outside the boundaries of the nation-state were habitually referred to as 'redeemed' and 'unredeemed' respectively. After 1922 the dream of extending the boundaries of the nation-state to include all the 'unredeemed' Greeks, as well as the Byzantine imperial and ecclesiastical capital of Constantinople, had to be abandoned, and with it many long-established attitudes to church and state. A rising generation of writers turned their back on the past and looked outside Greece for new artistic and political ideas with which to reinvigorate their own culture. It is with this self-styled Generation of the Thirties that the third stage in the relation of poetry to Christianity begins. In the 1930s Palamas and Sikelianos continued to make use of Christian language in their poetry (and

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[25] Varnalis 1956: 13-53.

[26] See p.18.

Sikelianos' use of it intensified in the 1940s), but Christian language is largely absent from the poetry of Seferis, Ritsos and Elytis, at least until well after the Second World War. Ritsos' *Ἐπιτάφιος* (1936) is the most notable, but only a partial, exception: it certainly contains echoes of liturgical language, but these are present because of the association of liturgical language with the tradition of Greek folk laments, which are the essential background to the poem. Christian themes are a significant new element in Seferis' late poetry, representing a belated recognition of Christianity as an enduring part of Greek culture. Seferis' interest in Christian languge, however, is similar in some respects to that of Ritsos in *Ἐπιτάφιος*, for both poets see Christianity as an aspect of Ἑλληνικότητα, rather than a system of belief which they are concerned to embrace or reject.

As a major work making extensive use of Biblical and liturgical language, Elytis' *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* (1959), then, is an anomaly, both in Elytis' career and in its time. It is, in some sense, a throwback to the earlier stage of contestation of Christian faith. It differs radically, however, from the work of Palamas and Sikelianos in one major respect: Christianity is hardly present as such in Elytis' poem, and his struggle with it is more indirect than that of his predecessors. He does not write about Christ or the Virgin, as do both Palamas and Sikelianos (by, for example, rewriting scenes from the Gospel). There are ambiguous passages addressed to God and the explicit rejection of the symbol of the Cross, but that is all.[27] For the rest, Elytis' method is to transpose Biblical and liturgical language into new contexts: the personal growth of the narrator confronted by the events of the 1940s.

One could say that for Elytis Christianity is so much of an anachronism that it no longer commands his respect; and in itself it appears

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[27] See pp.316-29, 334-7.

to him as no longer a vital element in Greek culture or national identity (though he admires earlier Christian writers such as Papadiamantis).[28] Recognizing, however, that the language of Christianity is heavily laden with cultural value— and that, besides, much of it is powerfully poetic— he appropriates it for his own ends. Clearly one of his aims is to promote 'the Poet' in such a way as to contest the central position occupied, in nationalist discourse and Greek culture generally, by Christ and the Virgin; another and not unrelated aim, is to challenge and outdo his predecessors.

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[28] See p.333.

1.4 Ruining the sacred truths

There are clear indications that *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* was written with the large-scale works of Palamas (*Ὁ Δωδεκάλογος τοῦ Γύφτου* and *Ἡ Φλογέρα τοῦ Βασιλιᾶ*) and of Sikelianos (*Πρόλογος στὴ Ζωή* and *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*) in its sights. Elytis was evidently vying with these works, attempting to succeed, where he perhaps judged Palamas and Sikelianos to have failed, in creating a fully integrated long poem which would give the Poet and poetry a pivotal role in its vision of national salvation (and Elytis certainly goes beyond Palamas and Sikelianos in his appropriations to the poetic ego of the words and functions of Christ). This type of retrospective contest between poets has been extensively explored by Harold Bloom in developing his theory of poetic influence, first elaborated in *The Anxiety of Influence*, where he speaks of the necessity for 'strong poets [. . .] to wrestle with their strong precursors'.[29]

In a later book, *Ruin the Sacred Truths*, Bloom extends his theory to more remote and more impersonal precursors such as Homer and, centrally, the Bible; and what he has to say there is pertinent to the relation of our three Greek poets to the sacred texts of Orthodoxy (as his general theory is pertinent to their relation to each other). Bloom takes his title from Marvell's poem 'On Paradise Lost'.[30] Marvell had feared that Milton 'would ruin [. . .] / The sacred truths to fable and old song', but in reading *Paradise Lost* he was reassured— wrongly according to Bloom, for

> all strong poets, whether Dante or Milton or Blake, must ruin the sacred truths to fable and old song, precisely because the essential condition for poetic strength is that the new song, one's own, always must be a song of one's self, whether it be called the *Divine Comedy*, or *Paradise Lost*, or *Milton: A Poem in Two Books*. Every sacred truth not one's own

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[29] Bloom 1973: 5.

[30] Included in the second edition of *Paradise Lost* (1674). See Milton 1966: 210.

becomes a fable, an old song that requires corrective vision.[31]

For Dante, Milton and Blake, we could substitute Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis, and say that each of them must ruin the sacred truths so that his new song may be a song of his own self, whether it be called *Ἡ Φλογέρα τοῦ Βασιλιᾶ*, *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, or *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί*.

This present thesis might, then, be characterized as an inquiry into the ways in which our three Greek poets 'ruin the sacred truths' in these and other poems. It does not, however, make any pretence to be a study in the spirit of Bloom. Bloom surveys the landscape of literature from an Olympian height. The work of the 'strong poets' (and strength is not the same as greatness)[32] lies before him as a series of mountain ranges receding one behind the other into the distant past. My method is at the other extreme. It involves taking up poetic texts one by one and looking at them under a microscope, teasing out the significant elements which have some relation to Biblical or liturgical texts. My aim, however, is not restricted to what Bloom dismisses as 'the wearisome industry of source-hunting, of allusion-counting'.[33] Most source studies, as I shall have occasion to remark of particular examples, stop short of literary criticism: they are content to demonstrate that a relation between two texts exists, without pausing to examine the nature of that relation. As I have already suggested in §1.1, to know that a given text alludes to an earlier text is of limited interest until we understand something of the way in which the allusion functions in its poetic context, and whether, and if so how, the earlier text is distorted or misrepresented by its partial incorporation into the later.[34] Such a

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[31] Bloom 1989: 125.

[32] A poet's 'strength' is measured by the effectiveness of his self-creation as a poet in defiance of precursors and his own mortality. See Bloom 1975: 9.

[33] Bloom 1973: 31.

[34] Bloom makes distortion or 'misprision', though on a larger scale, a 'central principle' of

transformation may have implications for the interpretation, not only of the later text which contains the allusion, but also of the source text. That is to say, the author of the later text may not simply be adding something to his own text through allusion, but also trying to influence the reader's perception of the source text.

Bloom's most general term for the process whereby a poet masters his precursors is 'transumption'. Bloom spoils this word by overuse in too great a diversity of contexts, so that its meaning becomes at times rather hazy. When he uses it to describe Milton's agonistic relation to the Pentateuch his intention is relatively clear:

> Milton revises Homer by transuming him correctively, but he reworks Moses even more cunningly, by a transumption gorgeously expanding the Bible, or displacing it through extraordinary condensation and perspectivizing.[35]

Clearly, transumption involves no reverence towards the sacred texts, but is, rather, a violent act by which the sacred text, the embodiment of sacred truths, is reshaped to express the new and (we are expected to believe) superior truths of the poet's vision. Milton's ambition, according to Bloom, was to supplant the Scriptures, to be the 'maker of an older and newer testament than the testaments already available to him', and 'to assert his own identity as poet-prophet, far surpassing Moses and Isaiah and the authors of the New Testament'.[36] One could compare this to Sikelianos' assumption of the role of Fifth Evangelist in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, of Elytis' reworkings of the language of Genesis in his «Ἡ Γένεσις» and of

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his theory of influence: 'Poetic Influence— when it involves two strong, authentic poets— always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation' (1973: 30).

[35] Bloom 1989: 93.

[36] Bloom 1989: 92, 113.

the Passion narratives in «Τὰ Πάθη», or perhaps of the iconoclastic utterances of some of Palamas' more authoritative voices (the Gypsy in *Ὁ Δωδεκάλογος τοῦ Γύφτου*, the Flute and the Apparition in *Ἡ Φλογέρα τοῦ Βασιλιᾶ*); and of all three poets in those many instances when they assume the role of prophet.

Bloom himself does not see allusion and other types of verbal affinity of a later to an earlier text as a significant means by which transumption is effected. He sees 'the transmission of ideas and images from earlier to later poets' as material for 'source-hunters and biographers' which has little to do with his concern.[37] If, however, we focus on the transmission of *language* and images, and go beyond mere identification of sources, we can see that the *ideas* (meanings) of the earlier text are not necessarily transmitted along with the language by which, in the earlier text, they are conveyed. Transposition of expressions, even verbatim transposition, from one context to another may radically change their meaning.[38] Such transmission is not necessarily, therefore, just 'something that happens', as Bloom asserts, which may or may not cause 'anxiety in the later poet' according to 'temperament and circumstance'. On the contrary, it may well be that in the subtle manipulation of appropriated language a poet is engaged in the struggle for ascendancy over a predecessor— the struggle which Bloom perceives only at a more general and more psychological level in terms of the later poet's self-creation— and particularly when that predecessor is the author of a sacrosanct text, or the God whose 'word' that text is held to be. Appropriation, we may say, then, is the equivalent at the textual level of the 'transumption', 'misprision', 'agon', etc. which in Bloom's theory define, at the

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[37] Bloom 1973: 71. See also Allen 1994: 18-21.

[38] Bryan Shelley (1994: viii) puts it more strongly: 'The fact that allusions are lifted from one context and placed in another indicates that they cannot simply duplicate meaning'.

psychological level, the relation of a poet to his precursors. Appropriation is not merely robbery, but, in many cases, robbery with violence, an assault on the validity and integrity of the source.[39] Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis in their appropriations of the language of Biblical and liturgical texts are, in many instances, seeking to influence the reader's perception and evaluation of the earlier texts, and thus 'ruin the sacred truths' embodied in them.

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39 Though the immediate context is a passionate argument against the institution of marriage, P.B. Shelley's striking metaphor in his Notes to *Queen Mab* (1813) also suggests such acts of poetic violence: 'The genius of human happiness must tear away every leaf from the book of God, ere man can read the inscription in his own heart' (Shelley 1990: 152).

1.5 Methodology

When Bloom speaks of Milton's transumption of Moses, he is thinking of Moses as author, the nominal author of the Pentateuch, the five 'Books of Moses'. Another poet, though, might set his sights on Moses as a character in the narratives of those books, and appropriate to some figure in his own poetry Biblical language which is descriptive of, or is uttered by, Moses; or he might transpose Moses, as a character, into a narrative of his own, or, as a metaphor, into a poem whether narrative or not. Among the sacred personae of the Bible, it is, not surprisingly, the figure of Christ which has above all attracted the attention of poets; closely followed, or even surpassed in the works of some Catholic and Orthodox poets, by the figure of the Virgin Mary. Though the Virgin is only a minor figure in the NT, she is present everywhere in Orthodox liturgical texts. It seemed to me that I could get most directly to the heart of the relation between modern Greek poetry and the language of Orthodoxy by concentrating on the appropriation of language which in some sense belongs to one or other of the two central figures of Christ and the Virgin; and this is the approach I have adopted, though not to the total exclusion of other appropriations.

It might be thought that my investigation spans the divide between literary and religious studies. However, its starting point is literary texts; it examines religious texts only to determine the nature and extent of their appropriation in literary texts; and its object is the reinterpretation of some central literary texts in the light of this appropriation. This strategy has not been widely adopted hitherto. One recent work which does take this approach is Bryan Shelley's *Shelley and the Bible*. The author states that his 'general method is to provide readings of Shelley's poems in the light of their biblical content', and that his goal is 'to assess the biblical elements in

terms of the poet's own religious outlook'.[40] Another, less recent, example is Osman Durrani's *Faust and the Bible*, subtitled 'A study of Goethe's Use of Scriptural Allusions and Christian Religious Motifs in *Faust I* and *II*'. Durrani explains that it takes the form of 'an analysis of biblical and religious material in which the immediate context of the quotations and references is used to illuminate their significance'.[41] In a review of the secondary literature on Goethe, Durrani indicates the unusual nature of his undertaking:

> In contrast to the interest which Goethe's religion has generated among scholars, there have been relatively few attempts to analyse the function of the biblical phraseology of single works or of small groups of works by Goethe. There have been elaborate tabulations of the biblical verses that occur in his poetic oeuvre, selective quotations intended to substantiate the most diverse contentions concerning his personal beliefs, and innumerable commendations of his "Bibelfestigkeit". Only in a few cases have the quotations been examined not for the attitude they reflect but for their function in their context.

This last sentence draws too stark a contrast. Durrani himself discusses Goethe's religious ideas as well as the poetic function of the Biblical allusions. (And the quotations from Bryan Shelley above indicate the same dual approach to Shelley's use of the Bible.) It would indeed be difficult to discuss the function of an allusion without discussing the ideas implicit in the text. What is important is that the discussion of ideas should be informed by the examination of the function of the allusion. Studies which stop short at the identification of sources are apt to suggest that the ideas associated with the source text are carried over into the text which contains the allusion. The analysis of the function of the allusion, including a careful comparison of the two texts to show if and how the later text distorts its

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[40] B. Shelley 1994: x.

[41] Durrani 1977: 12.

source, can provide a corrective and open up new avenues for interpretation.

In the field of modern Greek literary studies there is nothing comparable to *Shelley and Scripture* or *Faust and the Bible*. The closest is Evangelia Galani's thesis (1986, published 1988) on the 'living tradition of Byzantine liturgical poetry' in Elytis' *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί*, but this work has serious limitations. Galani's use of the phrase '*lebendige* Tradition' suggests religious interests, and she tends to look for confirmations of the liturgical material in Elytis. Frequently her exposition dwells more on the liturgical sources than on the corresponding extracts from Eytis. In places she does not go much beyond source identification, and she is insufficiently aware of the hostility to certain aspects of Christianity which underlies Elytis' use of liturgical material. A more radical objection to her methodology is that she deals with short, discrete extracts from *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί*, often without reference to their place and function in the poem. Furthermore, in concentrating almost exclusively on liturgical, and chiefly hymnographic, sources, she underestimates the presence of the Bible, sometimes making extremely tenuous connections with liturgical texts while ignoring a more obvious Biblical source. Though my approach to poetic texts is inevitably selective, I have tried to avoid such pitfalls.

My readings of poems by Palamas, Sikelianos and Elytis in this thesis are necessarily incomplete, not only in the general sense in which all readings must be incomplete, but also because they deliberately foreground a single aspect of the poems: their relationship, where it becomes a relationship of a tense or antagonistic kind, to Biblical and liturgical texts.

2

'Help thou mine unbelief': The reluctant ἀπιστία of Palamas

2.1 Introduction

Of the major poets of modern Greece Kostis Palamas (1859-1943) might be said to be, in a broad sense, and paradoxically (given his avowed atheism), the most religious. Some might argue that the title of most religious major poet belongs instead to Solomos, or to Sikelianos. But, as Peter Mackridge says, Solomos 'did not write Greek poems on purely religious subjects', and although 'there is a strong spiritual element in most of his work', this is usually 'presented as part of the experience of some individual human character'.[1] And Sikelianos, especially in his attempts to revive the ideas and rituals of ancient religion, exhibits an essentially modern, post-Christian sensibility. He speaks to his gods (among whom he includes Christ) as an equal, evidently aware that they are manifestations of the Self, but he rarely speaks of 'God' in the singular. While he does not accept Christianity on its own terms, Sikelianos feels no need to wrestle with it, and he accommodates with little apparent strain elements of Orthodoxy to his own syncretistic perspective. Palamas seems to lack the confidence of Sikelianos, and he has no single, consistent point of view. Sometimes, like Sikelianos, he blends

[1] Mackridge 1989: 24.

Christianity with paganism; sometimes he sees the two as diametrically opposed; and sometimes he rejects all existing religions in favour of a new Comtean religion without God, based on science and love. But he never lets go of the idea of religion; he is always seeking for what is worthy of worship. The characteristic angle of his gaze is upward, and 'Hymn', 'Psalm', 'Prayer' occur again and again in the titles of his poems. And yet Palamas lacks, as Sherrard puts it, 'that quality, perhaps best indicated by the term "faith"'.[2]

Here, Sherrard is, I think, using 'faith' to denote an inner state of conviction and commitment (a 'quality'), whereas, in an Orthodox context, πίστις tends to mean an outwardly expressed allegiance to the Church. One would not, I think, say that either Sikelianos or Elytis lacked faith (in Sherrard's sense), though neither poet is any more an Orthodox believer than Palamas. Their faith is in their own vision: their poetry maintains a confident and affirmative stance. Unlike Palamas, they are not seriously troubled by the question of belief (by which I mean the correspondence of their own visions with some ultimate reality). They seem to experience their poetic visions as self-validating. Not so Palamas, who never seems able to sustain for long his faith in his own vision, for that faith seems to be inextricably bound up with the belief in a transcendent deity which he lacks.

The thirteenth, the «Στερνὸς Λόγος» of *Ὁ Δωδεκάλογος τοῦ Γύφτου* (1907) offers a striking example of Palamas' recurrent failure of nerve in relation to his vision.[3] In the preceding twelve 'Words' or Cantos, Palamas' *alter ego*, the Gypsy, in the process of becoming a kind of Nietzschean Superman, has confronted and rejected all the idols and ideals of the past, and then resurrected them, as his own creatures, to take their

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[2] Sherrard 1956: 80.

[3] For other examples see Dimaras 1989: 71–4.

place in a glowing vision of a future world. From this 'great vision',[4] from behind the larger-than-life figure of the Gypsy, the poet himself emerges, to write in the 'Last Word', an uncomfortable and curiously unfocused apology addressed 'to a woman' (evidently his wife). He speaks of himself as small, weak and benighted; and he speaks of the moments when inspiration deserts him:

> Τὸ στόμα μου τ' ἀνοίγει τοῦ τραγουδιοῦ ἡ πνοὴ
> πρὸς τὴν ὡραίαν ἀλήθεια, πρὸς τὴν ὡραία ζωή.[5]
>
> κι ὄντας μοῦ λείψῃ ἡ θεία τοῦ τραγουδιοῦ πνοή,
> τῆς σιωπῆς ἡ κρύα ταφόπετρα μὲ κλεῖ.
>
> Κι ὄντας δειλὰ στὸν κόσμο κι ἀνήμπορος βρεθῶ
> τολμῶ μ' ἐσένα, 'Απάτη· Ψέμα, μ' ἐσὲ μπορῶ![6]

Palamas seems to give with one hand and take away with the other. What he gives are the 'great visions' in which he would like to believe, and which he may have felt it his role, as a public and patriotic poet, to provide. In the construction of Palamas as a representative voice of the Greek people, a 'national poet' second only to Solomos— a construction in which Palamas himself played a part— the negative, defeated, despairing aspects of his writing were overlooked. Nevertheless, a number of critics have written at length about the contradictions in Palamas. Doxas' book on Palamas documents quite thoroughly this aspect of his work, though few will accept its psychoanalytic interpretations.[7] Dimaras' approach is more constructive.

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[4] The *Δωδεκάλογος* is one of three poems which Palamas refers to collectively as Μεγάλα 'Οράματα (Palamas 1962-69: III, 293-4).

[5] An allusion to the beginning of the Canon in the Service of the Akathistos Hymn: 'Ανοίξω τὸ στόμα μου καὶ πληρωθήσεται Πνεύματος. Elytis' appropriation of this source (1980: 68; and see p.296 below) seems to be aware of these lines of Palamas.

[6] Palamas 1962-69: III, 449.

[7] Doxas 1959: 196-211 and *passim*.

While he fully acknowledges the ἐφιαλτικὸς διχασμός of the man, he sees it as, in some sense, resolved in the work, and the creative impulse as averting 'complete breakdown'. More than that, he perceives a development whereby the self-division 'no longer appears as an element of weakness for the poet, or as a stage which he must overcome, but as the precondition of his creation [. . .] a stage essential to the realization of the inspiration'.[8] Moschos' recent book (1993) on the 'metaphysical agony in Palamas', on the other hand, presents an unbalanced account of the religious conflict in Palamas, being heavily weighted on the side of faith.

Moschos fails to appreciate how religious feelings (emotive and aesthetic responses to religious ideas and images, the impulse to worship), which Palamas had in abundance, may exist without religious conviction or belief, which, however much he may at times have longed for it, Palamas did not possess, and had, perhaps, never experienced. Moschos' other mistake is to see the problem of faith in Palamas as the problem of Christian faith. There is, however, little to suggest that Palamas ever seriously entertained the possibility that the doctrines specific to Christianity, such as Incarnation and Redemption through Christ's suffering and Resurrection, might be true. What is at issue for Palamas is the existence of anything to which the name 'God' might be applied, the existence of any transcendent spiritual realm which would allow the assumption of some correspondence between the religious impulse and the nature of the world. The failure of Christianity, at an intellectual level, is taken for granted in Palamas; and it is Palamas' enduring fascination with Christian religious language that lays him open to the kind of misunderstanding typified by Moschos.

What unites Moschos with Doxas, and differentiates both from Dimaras, is the essentially non-literary nature of their enterprises: neither is centrally concerned with interpretation or evaluation of Palamas' poetry as

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[8] Dimaras 1989: 45-87, 74-5, 77.

poetry. From a perspective no less Christian than that of Moschos, and writing fifty years earlier, in an article on Palamas' 'religious views', Balanos offers a more balanced, and also more literary, approach to the complexities of Palamas' relationship with Christianity.[9] Balanos' article provides a useful and informative compendium of quotations from Palamas' prose and verse, interspersed with judicious comment, which illustrate the range and diversity of the poet's religious views. It stands as a signpost to the thorough critical examination of religion in Palamas which still remains to be written.[10]

Palamas' religious views are, however, the background and not the focus of this chapter, which is concerned with his use of Biblical and liturgical language. Nevertheless, as I shall try to show, a careful examination of Palamas' handling of some of his Christian sources throws new light on his religious attitudes.

For present purposes, the main problem in approaching Palamas is the wealth of relevant material his work offers. Probably no other modern Greek poet makes such extensive use of Biblical and liturgical texts.[11] Others may

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[9] Balanos 1943.

[10] Moschos 1993 does not qualify because of its partisan approach and its lack of any real critical analysis of the texts it produces in evidence. Compare Ricks's comment on Karavias 1960 (Ricks 1990: 287, n.11). Ricks refers to the uncollected material on which Balanos drew, namely the numerous articles on religious subjects which Palamas contributed to the daily press. Some were included in the *Ἅπαντα* (Palamas 1962-69) and the rest of Palamas' journalism is currently being republished (Palamas 1990—). The completion of this series of volumes will facilitate the study of Palamas' religious attitudes.

[11] A certain amount of useful work in source identification has already been done. Xydis (1950: 5-14) provides a list of citations from 'ecclesiastical texts' matched with lines from the whole range of Palamas' poetic works. However, comparison with Kasinis' more thorough investigation (1980: 243-322) of allusions to 'ecclesiastical, apocryphal and synaxarial texts' within a single work (the *Φλογέρα*) suggests that Xydis' list, extensive though it is (about 150 citations), is no more than a sampling of the more

perhaps equal him in frequency of allusion to such texts, but few poets' work is as extensive as that of Palamas. Though the work of Ritsos exceeds it in volume, it is nowhere near as rich in Christian allusions; and the intensive use of Christian material in *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* is not typical of Elytis' work as a whole. With Palamas I have had to be highly selective. *Ἡ Φλογέρα τοῦ Βασιλιᾶ* (1910) is clearly of central importance. It is Palamas' longest work,[12] and the one he himself was most attached to;[13] its main theme is the intersection of Christianity and paganism at a particular moment in history; and it contains a great deal of material borrowed from liturgical and other Christian texts. A discussion centred on a relatively small number of extracts from the *Φλογέρα* takes up a large part of this chapter (§§2.4-2.5). Of equal, if not greater, importance in Palamas' oeuvre is *Ὁ Δωδεκάλογος τοῦ Γύφτου* (1907), but its borrowings from Christian texts are comparatively few and it is discussed more briefly in §2.3. The basic structure of the chapter is chronological. The discussion of the two large-scale works is framed between analyses of shorter poems. §2.2 deals with a group of poems on the myrophores and the Resurrection, which antedate the *Δωδεκάλογος*, while the late poem «Θωμᾶς» (1925), which figures prominently in the first chapter of Tsatsos' influential book on Palamas,[14] is discussed in §2.6. Together, these shorter poems and the selected passages from the two major works provide representative examples of Palamas' shifting attitudes to Christianity, and of the different ways in which he appropriates— often doing it violence— the language of his Biblical and liturgical sources.

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obvious allusions.

[12] The *Δωδεκάλογος* occupies more pages in the *Ἅπαντα* but its lines are generally much shorter.

[13] Palamas 1962-69: XIV, 117, 425.

[14] Tsatsos 1936: 27-8.

2.2 Early poems on the myrophores and the Resurrection

In the 1880s and 1890s Palamas published many short poems on Christian themes. Some of these poems were never collected and can only be found now in the yellowing pages of newspapers, periodicals and almanacs.[15] Others, together with poems dated to this period but unpublished at the time, were incorporated, often decades later, into his published collections. In the last section of the volume *Δειλοὶ καὶ σκληροὶ στίχοι* (1928), for example, Palamas gathered together, under the heading «Γιορτές», a group of eight poems related to (mainly Christian) festivals[16] which range in date from 1889 to 1927 (or 1928).[17] The publication, in 1928, of a group of poems united by the idea of festivals may have been a response to the First Delphic Festival organized by Sikelianos in 1927.[18]

In the earliest of these poems, «Θυγατέρες τῆς Σιών»[19] (dated 1889 but not published before its inclusion in «Γιορτές»),[20] Palamas treats both

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[15] Two of the uncollected poems are discussed in this section, and a third is mentioned in §2.6 (p.125 n.196). For the full texts see the Appendix (pp.369-73). The republication of the uncollected poems would be a useful supplement to the *Ἅπαντα*.

[16] Palamas 1962-69: IX, 229-47. They include «Θωμᾶς» (discussed at length in §2.6)—hardly a celebratory poem, but in the Orthodox calendar the first Sunday after Easter is the Sunday of Thomas (see p.117 n.179).

[17] The latest of these poems, itself called «Γιορτές», is dedicated to Angelos Simiriotis and alludes to his volume of poetry *Ἐπὶ τῶν ποταμῶν Βαβυλῶνος*..., published in 1927.

[18] There is a mildly nationalist element in a number of these poems, including «Χριστούγεννα» (1910), «Ὁ χορὸς τοῦ πρωτοχρονιᾶς» (1925) and «Γιορτές» (see the preceding note), the last two alluding to the refugees from Asia Minor. In addition to the two poems on Easter themes discussed below, there is also the more overtly nationalist «Λαμπρή» (1925), which contains an example of syncretism, pairing the Virgin Mary with Athena.

[19] Palamas 1962-69: IX, 231-2.

[20] A considerable number, but still a small minority, of Palamas' poems are printed with a date after the text, representing, presumably, the date at which the composition of the poem was completed. Information about the composition dates of most of the other

the detail and the spirit of the Gospels with considerable licence. His 'daughters of Zion' are those female followers of Jesus who, at the Crucifixion, according to the epigraph from Mark, were 'watching from afar'.[21] The entire poem is addressed to the 'daughters of Zion'. The poet speaks to them in terms of praise and devotion, but the poem embodies a narrative element, since he refers to their role in, successively, the Anointing, Crucifixion and Resurrection. Christ, however, remains in the background and the focus of the poem is firmly on the women and their feelings towards him.

The phrase 'daughter of Zion' (in the singular) is very common in the prophetic books of the OT, where it denotes the city of Jerusalem itself. Of the very few occurrences in the plural, referring to the female inhabitants of the city, two are in contexts where their wantonness and corruption is being condemned, and a third is in the Song of Songs.[22] More common in the plural is 'daughters of Jerusalem', particularly in the Song of Songs, where it occurs (in the Septuagint version) seven times,[23] and where it is almost always in the vocative, as is the phrase 'daughters of Zion' in stanzas 6 and 9 of the poem.

It is clearly the erotic atmosphere of the Song of Songs that Palamas wishes to evoke (stanzas 1-2):

Τῆς Ἰεριχῶς μοσχόβολα τριαντάφυλλα,

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poems is unavailable: in many cases the only available information is the date of publication of the volume in which the poem was first collected. The principal sources of information about the publication dates of both individual poems and collections are the bibliographies compiled by Katsimbalis, and most conveniently Katsimbalis 1943, which covers all the poems published during Palamas' lifetime (except for some very early poems in periodicals local to Missolonghi, which Katsimbalis was unable to trace).

[21] Mark 15.40-41.

[22] Isaiah 3.16 and 4.4; Song of Songs 3.11.

[23] Song of Songs 1.4, 2.7, 3.5, 3.10, 5.8, 5.16, 8.4.

στὰ Βαγγέλια τ' ἀρώματα σκορπᾶτε.
Πίστης Ἐσεῖς καὶ ἀγάπης λόγια ἀνίκητα
τῆς ἄπιστης καρδιᾶς μου τῆς μιλᾶτε.

Ἀπὸ τὰ κέδρα τοῦ Λιβάνου ἡσκιώνεστε.
δροσίζεστε ἀπ' τὸ ρέμα τοῦ Ἰορδάνη.
στοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τὸν ἔρωτα τὰ νιάτα σας
φέρνετε σμύρνα, μάλαμα, λιβάνι.[24]

While the most obvious referent for 'myrrh, gold and frankincense' is the gifts of the Magi, all three are recurrent elements in the imagery of the Song of Songs.[25] Through the erotic associations of perfumes (so prominent in the Song of Songs)— perfumes which the women, as roses, scatter 'in the Gospels'— Palamas prepares his eroticizing of the relationship between his 'daughters of Zion' and Jesus. In this use of 'perfumes' he is only extending, though in a perverse way in relation to the Gospels, the role of some of these women as myrophores, for the three who are named in the epigraph (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome) are the same three of whom Mark later says that they 'bought spices that they might go and anoint him'.[26] When these women speak 'words of Faith and love' to the poet's 'faithless heart', 'love' is ἀγάπη, but the love which the same women have for Christ is ἔρωτας.[27] Here, however, 'Faith and love' are not necessarily two of Paul's three theological virtues,[28] and the reference to the poet's 'faithless' or 'unbelieving heart' should alert the reader to the probability of

[24] Compare in particular Song of Songs 4.12-15.

[25] See for example Song of Songs 3.6, 5.5, 5.10-16.

[26] Mark 16.1.

[27] In a later poem, «Κασσιανή» (1915), a free translation of Cassia's hymn on 'the woman who was a sinner' (see pp.90, 227-9), which is sung in Orthros for Wednesday in Holy Week, Palamas has the woman address Christ as Ἐρωτά μου (Palamas 1962-69: VII, 105).

[28] I Corinthians 13.13.

an unorthodox treatment of the subject. It becomes clear that whatever Palamas means by 'Faith' it is not belief in the divinity of Christ: and the only love which the poet expresses is for the human qualities of the myrophores. As an unbeliever he is drawn to them rather than to Christ.

Stanzas 3-5 refer to Gospel episodes involving the women and Jesus, drawing out their potential erotic content. In stanza 3 Palamas conflates two quite separate incidents from Luke, as well as bringing together characteristics which are sharply contrasted in the Gospel:

> Τὰ θεῖα ν' ἀκοῦτε μυστικά του ρήματα,
> καὶ ὁ πόθος σας καὶ ἡ ἔγνοια καὶ ἡ σκλαβιά σας
> καταφιλώντα τ' ἄχραντα ποδάρια Του,
> τὰ μυρώνετε μέσα στὰ μαλλιά σας.

The longing 'to hear his divine and mystic words' belongs to Mary of Bethany, who, sitting at Jesus' feet in her own house, ἤκουε τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ; and the 'worry and drudgery' to her sister Martha, who 'was distracted with much serving (διακονίαν)', and to whom Jesus said, μεριμνᾷς καὶ τυρβάζῃ περὶ πολλά.[29] However, the next two lines are derived from the anointing by the 'woman who was a sinner', who, coming to Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee with a 'flask of ointment [. . .] began to wet his feet with her tears',

> καὶ ταῖς θριξὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς ἐξέμασσε, καὶ κατεφίλει τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἤλειφε τῷ μύρῳ.[30]

[29] Luke 10.39-41. The contrasted characteristics of the two sisters are fused in a different way in «Θωμᾶς», where the poet declares he is both Mary and Martha (see p.125).

[30] Luke 7.38. The conflation is partly justified, since in John (12.1-8) Mary of Bethany performs a similar anointing, although the kissing of the feet is found only in Luke. While Palamas does not specify who his 'Daughters of Zion' are, they must be assumed to include, even if they are not limited to, the myrophores named in the epigraph. The association of the anointing with the myrophores could be justified through the Western tradition which identifies Mary Magdalene with the 'woman who was a sinner'. (This

Palamas' reworking produces a more erotic effect. The phrase, μέσα στὰ μαλλιά, suggests that in the act of kissing, the hair falls around the feet, enclosing them. Palamas makes no mention of the prosaic use of the hair to dry the feet, and since the ointment (μύρον) has disappeared into the verb μυρώνετε, which is closer here perhaps to its ordinary meaning of 'perfume' than to the ecclesiastical 'anoint', it seems that the hair is itself the source of the perfume.

According to stanza 4, what the women mourn at the Crucifixion is Christ's *beauty*:

> Ἀπάνου στὸ Σταυρὸ καθῶς ἀργόσβυνε,
> τὴν πανάγια θρηνήσατε ὁμορφιά Του.

Here we are closest to the context of the epigraph, but neither Mark nor any of the Evangelists speaks of the women as lamenting or weeping at the Crucifixion. On the way to Golgotha, however, Luke says that women in the crowd 'bewailed and lamented (ἐθρήνουν) him'. This prompts a rebuke from Jesus' which contains, significantly for the composition of this poem, the only NT occurrence of the phrase 'daughters of Jerusalem': θυγατέρες Ἱερουσαλήμ, μὴ κλαίετε ἐπ' ἐμέ.[31] The attribution of ὁμορφιά to Jesus has no basis in the NT, though there are liturgical precedents.[32] The lament

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identification is exploited by Sikelianos in his «Μαγδαληνή»: see pp.227-8.) Alternatively, one could say that Palamas is justified in including under his title any or all of the women of the Gospels.

[31] Luke 23.27-8.

[32] The best known examples of liturgical references to the 'beauty' of Christ are probably those in the Good Friday Encomia: the dead Christ is called ὁ ὡραῖος κάλλει παρὰ πάντας βροτούς (First Stasis No. 9); and the Virgin asks, Ὦ γλυκύ μου ἔαρ, γλυκύτατόν μου τέκνον, ποῦ ἔδυ σου τὸ κάλλος; (Third Stasis No. 17). Palamas (1962-69: VII, 100) uses phrases from the latter to characterize Good Friday services in «Μελένια» (1915); and Xydis (1950: 14) cites the former in connection with Palamas' explicit identification (1962-69: I, 368) of ὁ Ἐσταυρωμένος with ὁλόμορφος Ἄδωνις

of the women of Jerusalem for Christ on the way to his death may have brought to Palamas' mind the lament of Aphrodite and the Ἔρωτες for Adonis, and thus, inevitably, the beauty of Adonis.[33] The adjective, πανάγια, which Palamas associates with Christ's ὁμορφιά, as well as ἄχραντα in the previous stanza and παντοδύναμο in stanza 8, are characteristic of liturgical language. They belong to a class of honorific adjectives used more as marks of piety than for their semantic value. Their presence in the poem adds a liturgical flavour to Palamas' subversive distortion of Gospel incidents.[34]

When Palamas turns to the Resurrection his account is unorthodox in both interpretation and narrative detail (stanza 5):

> Τὴν πέτρα ὅταν τοῦ τάφου Του συντρίβοντας,
> ξαναφώτισε ὁ Κύριος τὴ χτίση,
> εἴσαστ' Ἐσεῖς τὰ πιὸ ἀκριβὰ του χτίσματα
> ποὺ στάθηκε νὰ πρωτοχαιρετήση.

In lines 3 and 4 Palamas makes the meeting of the women with the risen Christ, if not erotic, then at least more emotional and personal, by suggesting that they were the first to receive his greeting (the Χαίρετε) because they were for him 'the *dearest* of created beings'. The image of Christ 'shattering the stone of the tomb' is contrary to the Gospel accounts. Here Palamas is

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in No. 37 of the *Ἴαμβοι καὶ ἀνάπαιστοι* (1897). The insistence on Christ's beauty is of central importance in «Θωμᾶς» (see §2.6). For Sikelianos' identification of Christ and Adonis see p.142.

[33] As in Bion's *Ἐπιτάφιος*. Margaret Alexiou notes (1974: 57) that in the early Christian period 'there was a tendency for Adonis' seasonal return to earth to be regarded as a mystic death and resurrection'. She also suggests (*ibid*. 68, 80-82) that many ideas associated with the 'ancient ritual lament for the dying god' survived in popular culture and influenced the Good Friday Encomia.

[34] Ἄχραντα ποδάρια in the context of the anointing has a specific liturgical source in the hymn of Cassia referred to above (p.46 n.27): καταφιλήσω τοὺς ἀχράντους σου πόδας.

borrowing from the apocryphal story of the Harrowing of Hell, which is also found in liturgical texts. The second *sticheron* for the Vespers of Easter Saturday, for example, says of Christ, πύλας χαλκᾶς συνέτριψε. Once again Palamas has conflated two incidents.

In the remaining six stanzas of the poem Palamas is concerned more with interpretation than incident, elaborating a view of the Θεάνθρωπος (the word occurs in stanza 7) which focuses on the humanity and marginalizes the divinity. But first he considers the nature of the 'daughters of Zion' themselves (stanza 6):

> Θυγατέρες τῆς Σιών, μοῖρες ἰσάγγελες,
> τὴ δόξα τοῦ Κυρίου στεφανωμένες,
> Σᾶς ἀγαπῶ, γιατὶ ὅσο καὶ ἂν ἁγιάσατε,
> μένετε πάντα ἀνθρώπινα πλασμένες.[35]

This stanza cannot but be in deliberate contention with the passage from Luke which contains the only scriptural use of the unusual adjective ἰσάγγελος. Some Sadducees had put a question to Jesus: a woman had been married in succession to seven brothers, each of whom had died leaving no children; then the woman died; 'in the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be?' Jesus replies:

> The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die

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[35] In calling them μοῖρες ('Fates', who like the myrophores of Mark were three in number) Palamas is playing on the aural association with the words σμύρνα, μύρα, μυρώνατε, μυροφόρες and μοιρολόγι, present or latent in the poem. The last is linked to the others by its variant spelling μυρολόγι (from μύρομαι) used prominently by Papadiamantis (1981-88: IV, 297-300) in his short story «Τὸ μυρολόγι τῆς οὠκιας» (1908). The implied assimilation of the myrophores to classical mythology is not developed in this poem, but is central to «Χαιρετισμὸς ἀναστάσιμος» discussed below.

> any more, because they are equal to angels (ἰσάγγελοι) and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.[36]

This is all in terms of 'sons', whereas Palamas speaks of 'daughters'— daughters we might say 'of the resurrection', for it is essentially the myrophores he has in mind at this point. His phrase 'crowned with the glory of the Lord' suggests the resurrected state which Jesus discusses, but at the same time it seems to repudiate the exclusion of marriage from that state, since στεφανωμένες also signifies brides.[37] Palamas' opposition to the Biblical text now becomes clearer. He loves the myrophores 'because however much [they] are sanctified'— i.e. made immortal and like angels— they 'remain forever shaped in human fashion'. One senses behind this stanza a revulsion against the afterlife described by Jesus, in which human relationships no longer count.

The following stanzas insist again and again that it is the human qualities and the physical presence of Jesus which matter to the myrophores. In the God-man, they 'do not so much see the power of the God as feel the grace of the man' (stanza 7). From the 'all-powerful Logos', it is 'only the sound of his voice' which reaches them, and 'in his company the desert is brighter than the heavenly throne of His Father' (stanza 8). They are depicted, in other words, as women in love with a man, rather than as the followers of a religious leader or devotees of a divine being. In stanza 9 the theme of marriage appears again:

> Θυγατέρες τῆς Σιών, καὶ τὸ λαχτάρισμα
> ποὺ σᾶς τρεμοσαλεύει τ' ἁγνὰ στήθη,
> γιὰ τοῦ Σταυροῦ εἶναι τὸ νυμφίο τὸ μάρτυρα
> πιὸ πολὺ ἀπ' τὸν Κύριο ποὺ ἀναστήθη.

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[36] Luke 20.34-6.

[37] Relevant here perhaps is the one passage in the Song of Songs (3.11) where the actual phrase Θυγατέρες Σιών occurs. It refers to Solomon's wedding in terms of crowning.

Here we seem to be back in the erotic atmosphere of the Song of Songs.[38] The word νυμφίος ('bridegroom'), which, unlike νύμφη, does not belong to the Biblical text, is nevertheless very much a part of the exegetical tradition which treats the Song of Songs as an allegory of the relationship between Christ and the Church, understood as bridegroom and bride.[39] Mary Magdalene, who is singled out in the next stanza, has been interpreted as a 'type' of the Church, and some apocryphal texts refer to her as the spouse of Christ. There is, therefore, a theological background for Palamas' 'martyr, bridegroom of the Cross', which perhaps saves it from causing too much offence to devout readers.[40] It is, nevertheless, with its sado-masochistic implications, potentially the most disruptive erotic image in the poem. The pious, liturgical adjective ἁγνά is something of a prophylactic against those trembling breasts.[41] There can, however, be no theological defence of the whole statement of this stanza, that the myrophores' desire is more for the crucified, human Jesus than the resurrected, divine Lord. In stanza 10 the

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[38] The 'longing which makes [their] pure breasts tremble' might be compared with the excitement and confusion of the bride when the bridegroom comes to her door (Song of Songs 5.2-6).

[39] Those manuscripts of the Septuagint which annotate the text to indicate changes of speaker and/or addressee use νυμφίος throughout to denote the male beloved (Hatch & Redpath 1897: II, 951). The arrival of the νυμφίος in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25.1-13) is usually understood as a reference to the Second Coming of Christ.

[40] In a similar vein, in «Μελένια» (1915), Palamas twice refers to the Νυμφίος τῶν ἐπιτάφιων θρήνων (1962-69: VII, 101, 103), even though the word νυμφίος does not occur in the *Epitaphios Threnos* (Good Friday Encomia).

[41] Perhaps Palamas himself felt that the eroticism of this poem was likely to be more offensive to devout, or even not so devout, readers than the 'poems of unbelief' (Ricks 1990: 282) which he published at all periods of his life. The very public role he assumed (and from which he began to retreat after the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922) may have influenced his decision to withold this poem from publication for almost forty years.

adversative conjunction ὅμως indicates that the myrophores are being censured for their role in causing 'the man to be enthroned a god of gods here below'. This amounts to an implicit denial of the divinity of Christ.

In the remaining six lines the poem seems to lose its focus. Mary Magdalene is singled out as 'the most beautiful of all his miracles',[42] and the myrophores are told that their 'glory is shown more clearly in a single silent tear than in all the proclamations of the Apostles'. Despite the sentimentality, this is extremely contentious, a clear disparagement of Scripture which looks forward to the more antagonistic approach to the NT which is evident in «Χαιρετισμὸς ἀναστάσιμος».

In «Χαιρετισμὸς ἀναστάσιμος» (1898),[43] Palamas engages antagonistically with the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection, and principally with that of Matthew. Originally published as «Ὕμνος ἀναστάσιμος»,[44] the poem is a rather strange 'Easter Hymn', since it is addressed to the myrophores and not to Christ (who figures very little in it), and seems to deny the Resurrection. Perhaps Palamas was trying to conceal the subversive nature of the poem under a conventionally pious title.

Only two myrophores are named in Matthew: Mary Magdalene and 'the other Mary'. To these Palamas adds Salome (from Mark),[45] since a third myrophore was required to suit their characterization as Graces, traditionally three in number (stanza 1):

> Χαίρετ' ἐσεῖς, Μαγδαληνή, Μαρία, Σαλώμη !
> Ὦ μυροφόρες Χάριτες τοῦ Χρυσοκόμη,
> τοῦ νέου θεοῦ ποὺ πρῶτα πρῶτα προσκυνήθη
> μέσα σ' ἐσᾶς, βωμοί, ναοί, γυναίκεια στήθη !

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[42] Perhaps distantly echoing ἡ καλὴ ἐν γυναῖξιν (Song of Songs 1.8, 5.9 and 6.1).

[43] Palamas 1962-69: IX, 239-40.

[44] In an Easter number of the newspaper *Ἀκρόπολις* (5 April 1898).

[45] Matthew 28.1; Mark 16.1.

Their role in the Christian narrative is denoted by the word μυροφόρες, but this is purely adjectival, modifying Χάριτες, and thus suggesting that their Christian role is subordinate to their classical and pagan role as Graces; and the 'young god' whom they worship is referred to in this stanza only as ὁ Χρυσοκόμης, an epithet which belongs primarily to Apollo (although it was also used of Dionysus). Furthermore, the worship which they offer to the 'young god' is *within themselves*. Here, although he retains one of Matthew's verbs, Palamas implicitly rejects Matthew's statement that when Jesus greeted the women 'they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped (προσεκύνησαν) him'. Jesus' greeting, Χαίρετε, has been divorced from its narrative context and appropriated by the poet, who himself addresses the three myrophores or Graces. (The first line, containing the Χαίρετε, is repeated as the last line of stanzas 2 and 5.) The nearest the poet comes to naming Christ is in the syntactically isolated exclamation which forms the first line of the second stanza, where he uses the Jewish honorific, Rabbi:

Ὦ τῆς ἀγάπης ὁ Ραββὶ καὶ τῆς εἰρήνης !

In John the variant form, ραββουνί, is used by Mary Magdalene when she finally recognizes the risen Christ,[46] and this line should probably be understood as expressing the worship which the women offer within themselves, rather than as an aside in which the poet apostrophizes Christ. The tension between Ραββί and Χρυσοκόμης duplicates that between μυροφόρες and Χάριτες. Their role as Graces (who were noted for their bounty) is further exploited in stanza 6, where the poet calls on them to 'give of [their] own unimaginable happiness' to the earth, each person and each land.

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[46] John 20.16.

In the intervening stanzas, all ideas of worship are displaced from the 'young god' onto the Graces themselves, and the reality of the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection is explicitly denied. Why is the women's attention focused on the tomb? the poet asks in stanza 3, when it is they themselves, he implies, who are at the centre of the event: the angel's wings are ἡλιοστάλαχτα διαμάντια and 'an unprecedented outpouring of light *around you*'; and in stanza 4 the dying world shows *them* τριπλὴ λατρεία.

The suggestion here that the angel's wings are something other than wings, and that the angel is therefore not an angel, becomes explicit in stanzas 4 and 5: 'there is no tomb . . . nor Angel'— no tomb, because it is the world that 'gapes all empty and tumbled down'. The participle κατρακυλισμένος has obvious affinities with the verbs used in the Synoptic Gospels to denote the rolling away of the stone that sealed the tomb),[47] and in the denial of the angel Palamas subverts other details from the Gospels. While the tomb is translated into a metaphor of the old world dying, the angel becomes a metaphor for the 'new creation'. Clearly the basic idea is of the annual renewal of the earth in spring (stanza 5):

> Ἄγγελος μήτε· ἡ νέα πλάση πρωτολάμπει·
> ταράζονται (ὤ ! τῆς ἀστραπῆς τὰ ὁλόασπρα θάμπη !)
> σὰ νίκης λάβαρα καὶ οἱ φτεροσκέπαστοι ὦμοι.

Matthew says of the angel, ἦν δὲ ἰδέα αὐτοῦ ὡς ἀστραπὴ καὶ τὸ ἔνδυμα αὐτοῦ λευκὸν ὡσεὶ χιών.[48] What Palamas does, in effect, is to reverse the tenor and vehicle of Matthew's simile. The lightning, used as a simile for the angel's appearance, becomes the reality for which the angel, Palamas implies, is only a metaphor. The 'wing-covered shoulders' are insubstantial: they 'flutter like victory banners'. The latter image suggests

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47 Ἀποκυλίω (Matthew 28.2; Luke 24.2) and ἀνακυλίω (Mark 16.3-4).

48 Matthew 28.3

both the *labarum* of Constantine the Great and banners carried in processions, most pertinently perhaps processions marking the Ἐθνικὴ Γιορτή. Celebrated on 25 March, this, like Easter, is a Spring festival; and in any Greek poem about the Resurrection written since 1821 the equation of Ἀνάστασις and Ἐπανάστασις will not be far below the surface. Furthermore, there is evident and related political content in the final stanza of «Χαιρετισμὸς ἀναστάσιμος». This final stanza can be usefully approached through two uncollected poems published a decade earlier, in which the demythologizing of the circumstances of Resurrection is foreshadowed.

In «Ἀνάστασις» (1888) the first two of its four stanzas refer to the renewal of the natural world and the second two to renewal within the poet. Christ is nowhere mentioned, and, although the angel's function in relation to the tomb is referred to, it is displaced by his function as light-bringer to the world (stanza 2):

Κ' ἡ γῆ εὐμορφαίνει καὶ λαμποκοπᾷ.
Ὁ ἄγγελος ποῦ ἦρθε νὰ κυλίσῃ
Τὴν πέτρ' ἀπὸ τὸ μνῆμα διασκορπᾷ
Ὅλη τὴ λάμψι του, θαρρεῖς, ἐς τὴν κτίσι.

(1888)

In «Εἰς τὸν Ἄγγελον τῆς Ἀναστάσεως»[49] this idea is repeated, but in the course of a more extended paraphrase of Matthew, which unlike «Χαιρετισμὸς ἀναστάσιμος», does not take issue with its source:

Ἄγγελ', Ἐσύ, ποῦ ἀπὸ τὸ χιόνι
Ἔχεις λευκότερη στολή,
Κι' ἀπὸ τὴν ἀστραπὴ θαμπώνει
Τὸ μέτωπό σου πιὸ πολύ,

[49] For the full text and publication details of this poem and «Ἀνάστασις» see Appendix (pp. 369, 373).

Ἐσὺ ποὺ ἦρθες νὰ κυλίσῃς
Τὴν πέτρα τοῦ Χριστοῦ κρυφὸς
Κ' ἔκαμες κ' ἔλαμψεν ἡ κτίσις
Σὰν ἀπὸ μύριων ἥλιων οὠς.

The slightly odd reference to Christ, where one would have expected a reference to the tomb, enables Palamas to refer now to the 'other dead'. The light which the angel brings to 'creation' is the 'dawn of Paradise', but the poet does not assume that its benefits extend to them (stanza 3):

Σ' τοῦ Παραδείσου τὴν αὐγή,
Ὦ Ἄγγελε, μὴ φεύγῃς, στάσου
Καὶ καρτεροῦν τὰ θαύματά σου
Κι' ἄλλοι νεκροὶ ἐδῶ 'ς τὴ γῆ [50]

These 'other dead', who occupy the remaining four stanzas of the poem, include 'Faith and Love', 'Freedom', and 'peoples' suffering under 'Slavery'. There are repeated calls to the angel to 'stay and roll the stone', as for example in stanza 6:

Στάσου, καὶ κύλα τὸ λιθάρι
Ποῦ κλεῖ τοὺς τάφους των βαρειά,
Ν' ἀνθίσῃ ὁ κόσμος καὶ νὰ πάρῃ
Νιότη, ζωή, παρηγοριά!

In this poem Palamas in some sense accepts the angel of the Resurrection, even if only as a rhetorical device, and the wish expressed here (where των refers to 'Faith and Love') is a real wish with some expectation of fulfilment. This is not the case in the seventh and last stanza of «Χαιρετισμὸς ἀναστάσιμος» (to which I now return), which otherwise

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50 The implication, in the idea that 'the other dead await [the angel's] miracles', that the Resurrection of Christ was a miracle performed by the angel is highly contentious theologically, since it calls in question Christ's divine autonomy.

has much in common with the lines just quoted:

> Τῆς συφορᾶς ἄμποτε τ' ἄσειστο λιθάρι
> νὰ τὸ κυλάῃ ἑνὸς χιονάτου *ἀγγέλου* ἡ χάρη.
> καὶ τὰ τρανὰ νεκρὰ καὶ τὰ νεκρὰ τὰ ὡραῖα
> νὰ ξαναπαίρνουν μιὰ ζωὴ γιὰ πάντα νέα !

«Χαιρετισμὸς ἀναστάσιμος» was published in the year following the defeat of the Greek army by the Turks in Thessaly in 1897, and this must be the 'disaster' to which this last stanza primarily refers. These lines contain no expectation that the wish they express will be fulfilled, for we have already been told that there is no angel. The poet knows that the dead will not 'take up again a life forever new'. The stone (λίθος) of Matthew which the angel rolled away (ἀπεκύλισεν) has become 'the immovable stone' (ἄσειστο λιθάρι) of the disastrous events which cannot be undone. In this last stanza Palamas' mode of engagement with Matthew's text changes. Having denied the veracity of, or demythologized, the details of the Resurrection story, he now uses some of those details to deny the resurrection of the dead in general and in particular the 'renowned and beautiful dead' of the recent military disaster.[51] The χιονάτος ἄγγελος derives from Matthew's description of the angel's garment as λευκὸν ὡσεὶ χιών, and the adjective ἄσειστος both evokes and denies the 'earthquake' (σεισμός) associated with the angel in Matthew:

> καὶ ἰδοὺ σεισμὸς ἐγένετο μέγας· ἄγγελος γὰρ Κυρίου
> καταβὰς ἐξ οὐρανοῦ προσελθὼν ἀπεκύλισε τὸν λίθον.[52]

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[51] This poem suggests, but does not explore, the consequences of the denial of the Resurrection for the equation of national renewal with the Resurrection which was, and remains, a significant element in the language of Greek patriotism. It also implies an awareness of I Corinthians 15.12-19, where Paul sees the resurrection of the dead as contingent on the Resurrection of Christ.

[52] Matthew 28.2.

But Palamas appropriates Matthew's language to describe an angel he wishes for but does not believe in.[53]

A number of distinct tendencies are evident in Palamas' handling of Christian language and imagery in these relatively early poems— tendencies which can be observed again in his later work, and notably in *Ἡ Φλογέρα τοῦ Βασιλιᾶ*. There is, first, the marginalization of Jesus. The focus of attention in the Gospels is always the figure of Jesus: his words and deeds, his birth, death and Resurrection. But in adapting Gospel incidents, Palamas tends to shift the focus to secondary figures (the female followers of Jesus, the angel at the tomb), and Jesus is present only, as it were, behind these figures, as the object of their experience; and the myrophores are explicitly rebuked for having made too much of Christ.

There are some early poems, such as «Πλάστη μου Χριστέ» and «Προσευχή» (written in 1878 and 1879 respectively), in which Palamas focuses on Christ.[54] They are full of conventional pious phrases, and it is by no means clear that they express Palamas' 'original impulsive faith [. . .] before the hot wind of rationalism came and withered it', as Moschos suggests.[55] «Πλάστη μου Χριστέ» refers to the poet's distance from his own soul (λυπήσου με τώρα ποὺ ζῶ μακρυά της), which he prays may bring its faith and love to Christ like the gifts of the Magi. «Προσευχή» is addressed to Γλυκέ μου 'Εσταυρωμένε, represented in an icon above the poet's bed, but it seems likely that the occasion of the poem, which ends

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[53] The bitter regret for that which does not exist extends perhaps to the Graces through the use of the word χάρη: 'would that *the grace* of a snow-white angel might roll away the stone': this is the only stanza which lacks the recital of their three names, Magdalene, Salome and Mary.

[54] Palamas 1962-69: X, 450-51; I, 120.

[55] Moschos 1993: 317-18. See also Ricks's rejection (1990: 287, n.12) of Palamas' 'conversion to unbelief'.

with a plea for protection from ἡ Νεράϊδα ἡ κακή with τὰ δολερά της κάλλη, was guilt over some sexual impurity. Apart from these early poems and some passages in the sequence entitled «Μεσσίας» (1892), Christ is rarely the focus of Palamas' attention in his poetry. There are of course many passing references, particularly to the Infant Christ, the Βρέφος. Palamas returns again and again to the imagery of the Nativity— the manger and the animals, shepherds and angels, the star and gifts of the Magi— but usually there is some indication that for him the Nativity is primarily a metaphor. This is true of «Χριστούγεννα»[56] and of «Ἕνας θεός» (1890, included in «Μεσσίας»), which speaks of the birth of 'a god within me'.[57] In the *Φλογέρα* , despite the central role of the Virgin, even Christ as Infant is largely excluded (§2.4). And I shall argue that the risen Christ of «Θωμᾶς» is primarily a metaphor, divorced from Christian doctrine (§2.6).

A second tendency, a corollary but not a necessary corollary of the marginalization of Christ, is the concentration on the female figures associated with Christ (the myrophores in the poems already discussed, the Virgin Mary in the *Φλογέρα*). Orthodox popular religion often is, or at least appears to be, the religion of Mary rather than of Christ. Allied to this is the tendency of European male poets, and particularly from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century (Romanticism and its aftermath), to idealize and worship 'Woman'; and γυναικολατρεία is a constant feature of the poetry of Palamas.

A third tendency is Palamas' theological contentiousness, shown in «Χαιρετισμὸς ἀναστάσιμος», which treats the story of the Resurrection as a metaphor rather than a reality and seems to take issue with the Gospels.[58] Palamas was well aware of recent developments in Biblical

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[56] See p.44 n.18.

[57] Palamas 1962-69: I, 305.

[58] Moschos quotes extensively from both «Θυγατέρες τῆς Σιών» and «Χαιρετισμὸς

criticism which had demonstrated the human and historically determined elements in the composition and editing of many of the books of the Bible. No person open to rational discourse could any longer take the Bible to be in any simple (fundamentalist) sense the *words* (as opposed to the Word) of God. Christian writers and artists had always elaborated Biblical narratives, imagination supplying details that were lacking, but they had rarely (consciously at least) contradicted the Bible. One offshoot of the new critical approach to the Bible by theologians and scholars was the publication by sceptics and believers alike of numerous 'Lives of Jesus'. Palamas had certainly read and admired Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (1863); and he had read Nietzsche,[59] who, though he had little but contempt for Renan,[60] shared his conviction that one could set aside the distortions of the NT to apprehend the essential nature of its central figure (though Nietzsche is concerned with the psychological reality rather than the historicity of Jesus).[61] Palamas, of course, approaches the Bible as a poet, not as a historian or philosopher. The manner in which he conflates and adapts Gospel incidents suggests that he has little respect for, or interest in, the Gospels as records of the life of Jesus. Whereas for Renan and Nietzsche the Gospel must be rewritten to reveal its supposedly objective truth, Palamas rewrites to express his personal and subjective poetic truth.

ἀναστάσιμος», as prime examples of θρησκευτικὰ ποιήματα, but he reads these poems through the rose-tinted spectacles of religion, apparently unaware of any tension between the poems and the Gospels or Christian doctrine (1993: 187-91).

[59] Palamas used a quotation from Renan's *Vie* as an epigraph to his poem «Ἀπόκρυφον Εὐαγγέλιον», first published in 1890 (1962-69: I, 306). There are many references to both Renan and Nietzsche in Palamas' prose works, and in his poetry he sometimes makes use of Nietzsche's concept of the 'Superman' (Nietzsche 1969: 41-5, 103-4 and *passim*), notably in the *Δωδεκάλογος* (see p.66 below). On the limited extent of Palamas' acquaintance with the work of Nietzsche see Eklund 1972: 28-30.

[60] Nietzsche 1990: 78-9, 153.

[61] Nietzsche 1990: 152-60.

Related to both this theological contentiousness and to the concentration on the feminine is a fourth tendency in Palamas, the tendency to eroticize Gospel incidents. This is evident in the emphasis on the ἔρωτας of the 'daughters of Zion' for Jesus, the insistence on his beauty, and in the expression 'bridegroom of the Cross'. In this very obvious eroticization, Christ becomes the object of longing for the women of the Gospels, while it is they, the myrophores, who are the objects of the erotic interest of the poet. The poet's erotic interest in the myrophores could have been expressed through an identification with Christ; but Christ is scarcely present in these poems and the poet seems, rather, to vie with Christ for the women's attention. He criticizes them for making too much of Christ and appropriates Christ's greeting, the Χαίρετε. This type of appropriation, which does not imply the poet's identification with Christ so much as the displacement of Christ by the poet, is not of course really developed in these early poems, or, indeed, in Palamas' work generally, though it is a significant element in the stance of Palamas' alter ego, the Gypsy, in the *Δωδεκάλογος*. In Sikelianos the displacement of God or Christ by the poet is an important function of the appropriations of Christian language, and in Elytis' *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* it becomes the central function.

A fifth tendency to be noted in Palamas' early poems is syncretism, a ready accommodation of Christianity to paganism, the almost casual identification of Christ with Apollo, the myrophores with the Graces. It is a tendency which could be widely illustrated throughout modern Greek poetry, and which is associated particularly with Sikelianos. Such syncretism is, however, challenged in the *Φλογέρα*, whose principal theme involves, rather, a confrontation between the classical and the Byzantine-Christian traditions. Before proceeding to discuss the *Φλογέρα* a brief account will be given of Palamas' earlier large-scale work, *Ὁ Δωδεκάλογος τοῦ Γύφτου*.

2.3 God and the poetic ego in the *Δωδεκάλογος*

Ὁ Δωδεκάλογος τοῦ Γύφτου[62] does not confront Christian material in the direct manner of the early poems on the myrophores and the Resurrection, or engage in any extended way with Biblical or liturgical texts. Nevertheless, it is centrally concerned with religious issues; and for this reason, and because of its widely acknowledged central importance in Palamas' oeuvre,[63] and above all for the examples it offers of those kinds of appropriation in which the poet seems to aspire to play the role of God, some account of it must be given.

The *Δωδεκάλογος* was begun in 1899 and published in its entirety in 1907. Thus its gestation falls within the much longer period during which Palamas was working on the *Φλογέρα* (1886-1910). There are many thematic connections between the two works as well as an obvious formal resemblance: each is cast in twelve *Λόγοι* (usually referred to in English as Cantos). The Gypsy, the persona who speaks the poem, is Palamas' most successful projection of the poetic ego, his most developed and uncompromising assertion of the autonomy and authority of the poet. Palamas' identification with the Gypsy is not in doubt: in the Preface to the *Δωδεκάλογος* he says, 'I felt within me that I too was a gypsy, even though I was ashamed to admit it; a gypsy with his vices and misfortunes'.[64] Dimaras goes further (and perhaps too far), implying that Palamas' own experience is the subject matter of the poem, when he says that 'in the *Δωδεκάλογος* the poet's own soul speaks, it relates its sufferings and describes its redemption'.[65] If so, the Gypsy is a self-image with which

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[62] Palamas 1962-69: III, 303-450.

[63] See for example Ricks 1990: 276; Trypanis 1981: 656; and Savidis in Palamas 1962-69: III, 459.

[64] Palamas 1962-69: III, 290.

[65] Dimaras 1989: 116.

Palamas felt uncomfortable, at least in public, as his reference to being ashamed indicates (as does the «Στερνὸς Λόγος»).[66]

The Gypsy is rather loosely located in the last century of Byzantium. Palamas refers to the first appearance of the Gypsies in Thrace 'about a hundred years before the capture of the City',[67] but in Canto V the Gypsy is a witness to its fall. The Gypsy is not really rooted in historical time. He is a wanderer in time as well as space, knowing the future as well as the past; and though his knowledge of the future (from a late Byzantine perspective) has the benefit of the author's hindsight, his vision extends beyond the author's present, embodying Palamas' utopian dreams. The narrative unity of the poem does not derive, though, from any sense of historical development that informs it, but from being the story of the Gypsy's soul. It tells of his developing understanding of the world, and of his successive attempts to find his proper relation to it and his true means of creative expression.

In the first three Cantos the Gypsy introduces himself and the gypsy culture to which he belongs, and describes the various *métiers* through which he tried to express his creative impulses. None satisfied him, and, in Canto III, even the love of the Περδικόστηθη Τσιγγάνα failed of its promise and in the end cramped his soul.

The next three Cantos express an uncompromising rejection of all religions. In Canto IV, «Ὁ θάνατος τὼν θεῶν», the Gypsy denies the existence of gods whom he calls ἴσκιοι φαντασμάτων [. . .] τῆς πλάνης γιγαντέματα (337:12-13),[68] and proclaims himself τοῦ Τίποτε / πανελεύτερος ὁ κράχτης (338:3-4). Canto V, «Ὁ θάνατος τῶν

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66 See pp.39-40.

67 Palamas 1962-69: III, 294.

68 References to the text of the *Δωδεκάλογος* are given in the form of the page number in volume III of the *Ἅπαντα* followed by the line number(s) within the page, separated by a colon (this edition is not line-numbered).

ἀρχαίων», is directed not so much at the ancient Greek gods as at the whole of ancient Greek culture, represented by the manuscripts which the scholars of Constantinople are taking to the West. In Canto VI, the Gypsy observes a group of Christians burning the works of the fifteenth-century NeoPlatonist, Plethon; a group of 'polytheists', disciples of Plethon, are standing by. The Gypsy rejects both Christianity and paganism, telling both groups that they are wrong.[69]

In Canto VII the Gypsy urges the gypsies assembled en masse at a fair to reject the emperor's offer of a homeland. This provides a subtle contrast with Canto VIII, «Προφητικός», in which a Prophet (who is clearly not the Gypsy) foresees not only the fall of Constantinople but also, in veiled terms, the hope for its restoration to the Greeks (400:23-5; compare 399:15-22).

Canto IX is entitled «Τὸ βιολί», and the violin which the Gypsy finds is, as Dimaras says, 'a symbol of art',[70] and more precisely, surely, a symbol of poetry. In this violin the Gypsy at last discovers his true means of expression; and its music is, in a sense, the text of the *Δωδεκάλογος*. In Canto X, «'Αναστάσιμος», it is the violin's music which opens the tombs and brings back to life 'Αγάπη, Πατρίδα and the gods (413:25—414:11). The resurrection of the gods does not, *pace* Dimaras,[71] signal the Gypsy's acceptance of the religions he had previously denied and scorned. The resurrected gods speak of themselves as projections or reflections of the human psyche (417:3-6; 418:25-6), and as the embodiments of human ideals (417:23-6). The gods are resurrected only in art; and the resurrection of Πατρίδα refers to the Gypsy's ultimate destination, probably to be identified with the ἰδεατὴ / κορφή, ὑπερούσια Πολιτεία which is the

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[69] In this the Gypsy's perspective differs from that of the Flute in the *Φλογέρα* (see pp.100-116).

[70] Dimaras 1989: 119.

[71] Dimaras 1989: 119.

creation of his art (τῆς μουσικῆς μου κόρη) (416:6-8). The Gypsy does not elaborate on the resurrection of 'Αγάπη as such. It is transmuted into the resurrection of the Περδικόστηθη gypsy woman of Canto III, and the renewal of the idea of their progeny, ἀψεγάδιαστα παιδιά, the last of whom will be the Superman (419-420).[72]

Canto X completes the dramatic shape of the *Δωδεκάλογος*, and Cantos XI and XII are merely codas in which the Gypsy has little part and his voice is scarcely heard. The παραμύθι of Tearless and Laughterless encapsulates, in a more obviously dramatic form, the dramatic shape of the first ten cantos. The Gypsy even suggests he may have lived this story 'once upon a time' (421:7-10), and it ends with Tearless, like the Gypsy at the end of Canto X, foreseeing the greatness of his descendants. In Canto XII the Gypsy is in Thrace, where the trees relate to him their vision of the past and future of the world. They foresee a 'third Olympus' (the first being that of classical paganism, the second, presumably, that of Christianity) where Science will be enthroned (440:15-17; 441:22-4). This is associated with a utopian vision of a world which, the closing lines of the poem suggest, can only be experienced (now, at least) through art (443:26-9):

> Μ' ἐμᾶς πρῶτος τὴ μελλόμενη
> μοῖρα ὑπέρτατη στερνή,
> Γύφτε, ζῆσε τὴν ἀπάνου
> στὸ προφητικὸ βιολί.

It is clear from this brief summary that the issue of religion, both pagan and Christian, is central to the *Δωδεκάλογος*. While the poem only occasionally engages closely with Biblical or liturgical texts, David Ricks has identified a more diffuse engagement with Christian language, at least in Canto IV («Ὁ θάνατος τῶν θεῶν»), in terms of the large number of NT

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72 Compare Nietzsche 1969:103.

words present in the poetry. Referring to 'the language of Christianity turned against itself', he singles out a stanza in which an oblique allusion to the Crucifixion is combined with the use of walking on water as a figure for the impossible (338:17-20):

> Τόσο νὰ καρφώσω πρὸς ἐσὲ
> δύναμαι τὸ στοχασμό,
> ὅσο δύναμαι τὴ θάλασσα
> πεζοδρόμος νὰ διαβῶ.

Though addressed to 'any god' (ὅποιε θεέ, 338:12) this stanza, as Ricks says, 'clearly has Jesus in its sights'. Ricks speaks of it as 'harshly blasphemous' and as 'callously veiling the verb προσηλόω and the nailing of Christ to the Cross'.[73] The same callousness is evident in Canto II, where, among the things the Gypsy speaks of making as a blacksmith, are τὰ καρφιὰ τοῦ σταυρωμοῦ (318: 11). This evokes, and indeed antagonizes (by identifying with the villain), the Greek folk tradition of the Virgin's curse, which in some versions includes the cursing of the ἀτσίγκανος who made the nails for the Cross.[74] Furthermore, τίμια ξύλα (relics of the Cross) are among the religious objects the Gypsy speaks of stealing from churches and strewing at the gypsy woman's feet for her to trample (337:7; 420:11).[75]

These gestures of gross disrespect towards Christ and the central symbol of Christian religion go far beyond the marginalization of Christ noted in the earlier poems, and are at variance with the respectful, however ambivalent, attitude to Christ evident in some of Palamas' poems. They do,

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[73] Ricks 1990: 284.

[74] As in the version from Kastellorizo published by Achilleus Diamantaras (1895: 722γ'). See also Alexiou 1974: 65.

[75] The trampling of sacred objects is analogous to the impulse to 'ruin the sacred truths' of which Bloom writes (see pp.30-32).

however, have their counterparts in a number of the Flute's anti-Christian utterances in the *Φλογέρα*.[76] It appears that, in general, Palamas does not express outright hostility to Christianity except through voices of distinct personae, such as the Gypsy or the Flute, which are, at least formally, distanced from himself. Such personae are, nevertheless, projections of the poetic ego: projections which enabled the poet to bypass the habitual humility and reverence towards culturally accepted manifestations of the divine which seem to have characterized Palamas the man. The poetic ego in its bid for pre-eminence, or even omnipotence, inevitably comes into conflict with the gods, prophets and saints who embody the supreme values of its culture, and this conflict can be illustrated in some of the Gypsy's appropriations of Christian language and symbols.

In the passage containing the stanza which alludes disparagingly to the Crucifixion and Christ's walking on the water, the Gypsy is speaking primarily of his own role. Eventually he applies to himself the word προφήτης (340:21), but first he speaks of the effect of his passage through the world in terms reminiscent of Isaiah (339:13-17):

> μὲ τὸ πάτημά μου βλάστησε
> τὸ βοτάνι ποὺ λυτρώνει,
> καὶ μὲ τὴ ζωή μου ὁλάνθισε,
> καὶ στὴν ἔρημο φυτρώνει,
>
> τὸ βοτάνι τῆς ἀνάστασης!

Isaiah's reference to the flowering of the desert is well known:

> Εὐφρανθήτι, ἔρημος διψῶσα, ἀγαλλιάσθω ἔρημος καὶ ἀνθήτω ὡς κρίνον, καὶ ἐξανθήσει καὶ ὑλοχαρήσει καὶ ἀγαλλιάσεται τὰ ἔρημα Ἰορδάνου.[77]

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[76] See pp.100, 106, 113.

[77] Isaiah 35.1-2. The transition from imperative to future is reflected in the transition

While Palamas does not name his βοτάνι τῆς ἀνάστασης. Isaiah speaks of the desert blossoming ὡς κρίνον. and the two expressions are related through the traditional association of lilies and Easter. Palamas' βοτάνι τοῦ λυτρωμοῦ and the idea of walking through the desert reflect the verses which follow this extract from Isaiah, where it is said that an ὁδὸς ἁγία will appear in the transformed desert and πορεύσονται ἐν αὐτῇ λελυτρωμένοι.[78]

In Isaiah the flowering of the desert is associated with the presence of God:

> ἀγαλλιάσεται τὰ ἔρημα [. . .] καὶ ὁ λαός μου ὄψεται τὴν δόξαν Κυρίου [. . .] ἰδοὺ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν [. . .] αὐτὸς ἥξει καὶ σώσει ἡμᾶς.[79]

Thus the Gypsy's appropriation of the language of Isaiah takes him beyond assuming the role of the Hebrew prophet to an appropriation of divine functions, for it is the passage of the Gypsy which brings about the flowering of the desert and the emergence of the symbols of salvation and resurrection. This is only one of many appropriations of divine attributes or roles in the Δωδεκάλογος. Obviously all such appropriations must involve Christian concepts, and some involve identifiable elements of Biblical or liturgical language.

Towards the end of Canto V, for example, the Gypsy announces to the 'ancients' (354:33—355:2),

> εἶμ' ἡ ἀλήθεια.

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from aorist to present in Palamas. Another common feature is the multiplication of verbs denoting the growth of plants.

[78] Isaiah 35.8-9.

[79] Isaiah 35.2-4.

εἶμ' ἐγὼ τὰ δυὸ τ' ἀχώριστα·
σάρκα καὶ ψυχή [1]

The first assertion is identical to one of Christ's,[80] while the second is suggestive of the indivisible union of the two natures in Christ as formulated in Patristic Christology, or of the way in which the Manhood of Christ is traditionally defined.[81]

Having found in the violin the means to be creative, the Gypsy proclaims in extravagant terms (405:9-12, 17-19),

Χτύπα, δοξάρι μου, καὶ χτίζε,
ὁ κόσμος γίνεται ἀπὸ μένα
μέσα στὰ χέρια μου τὰ δυό.
Ὦ γέννα, ὦ γέννα!
. . . . . .
κ' ἕνας ὁ πλάστης, καὶ εἶμ' ἐγώ,
κι ὁ λόγος ποὺ θαυματουργεῖ
κι ὁ λόγος εἶναι ἡ μουσική!

Πλάστης and Κτίστης (Palamas uses the cognate verb χτίζω) are both common liturgical words for Christ as Creator. The Gypsy asserts that he himself is the only creator. He is speaking of the world of art, not of the world of actuality, but his claim demonstrates that there is no place for God in this world of art. The λόγος that works miracles evokes both creation through divine utterance in the opening of Genesis and the Logos of John, which 'was in the beginning with God' and through which 'all things were made'.[82] In the world of art the Gypsy and the violin, as joint creators, have all the functions of God and the Logos in John.

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80 John 14.6.

81 As in the Athanasian Creed: Τέλειος Θεὸς καὶ τέλειος ἄνθρωπος, ἐκ ψυχῆς λογικῆς καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης σαρκὸς ὑποστάς.

82 John 1.2-3.

In his initial self-portrait in Canto I the Gypsy claims, in equally God-like manner, that he alone 'divines [his] own being' (310:9-10). This is immediately followed by a bold image which makes the forces of nature his servants (310:11-15):

> νὰ τυλίγῃ φόρεμα τὸ εἶναι μου,
> φόρεμα ποὺ τὸ εἶχαν πλέξει
> ἀπὸ τὶς δροσοσταλίδες
> τοῦ ροδόφυλλου τὰ χέρια
> μιᾶς Αὐγῆς!

To this he later adds (312:23-5):

> ὁ νοῦς μου
> γιὰ κορώνα του φορώντας
> τὴν κορώνα ὅλης τῆς πλάσης.

Though the parallels are not very close linguistically, these lines are clearly related to Biblical imagery such as ἀναβαλλόμενος φῶς ὡς ἱμάτιον, ἐκτείνων τὸν οὐρανὸν ὡσεὶ δέρριν (referring to God) and περιβεβλημένη τὸν ἥλιον [. . .] καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς στέφανος ἀστέρων δώδεκα (referring to the 'great portent [. . .] in heaven', the woman pregnant with the child 'who is to rule all the nations').[83]

Consistent with the Gypsy's appropriation of cosmic imagery and the language of divine creation is his role as forefather of the Ἀρχοντάνθρωπος [. . .], στερνοπαίδι, ὁ λυτρωτής, and the generation through his music of the ὑπερούσια Πολιτεία. As a theological term,

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[83] Psalm 103(104).2; Revelation 12.1-2, 5. For a more extensive exploitation of the latter passage by Palamas in the *Φλογέρα* see pp.95-7. Also relevant, since it provides a link with Palamas' 'Dawn', is Romans 13.12: ἡ νὺξ προέκοψεν, ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤγγικεν. ἀποθώμεθα οὖν τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκότους καὶ ἐνδυσώμεθα τὰ ὅπλα τοῦ φωτός.

common in liturgical texts, Λυτρωτής denotes Christ: and in combination with it here στερνοπαίδι suggests Paul's description of Christ as ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ.[84] The ὑπερούσια Πολιτεία may be likened in its general conception and in certain particulars to the πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καινήν of the Apocalypse. Both are personified as young women: the Gypsy's 'Celestial City'[85] as 'daughter' of his music, the new Jerusalem as 'a bride adorned for her husband'.[86] The relation of the 'Celestial City' to other nations is described in the following lines (416:5-8, 18-20):

> Κι ἀπάνου ἀπ' ὅλες τὶς πατρίδες
> δόξα σ' ἐσένα, ἰδεατὴ
> κορφή, ὑπερούσια Πολιτεία
> τῆς μουσικῆς μου κόρη ἐσύ !
> . . . . . .
> καὶ εἶναι γραμμένο νὰ γενῇς
> κ' ἐσὺ βυζάστρα ὅλων τῶν ἄλλων
> ἐδῶ πατρίδων κάθε γῆς.

A similar benign supremacy characterizes the relation of the 'new Jerusalem' to the nations of the earth (note the references to 'glory' in both texts):

> περιπατήσουσι τὰ ἔθνη διὰ τοῦ φωτὸς αὐτῆς, καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς φέρουσι τὴν δόξαν [. . .] αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτήν.[87]

The verb περιπατήσουσι may be reflected in the noun περπάτημα in Palamas' next stanza. The former is associated with light, which in the context has a specifically Christological meaning,[88] and the latter with

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[84] I Corinthians 15.45.

[85] Katsimbalis and Stephanides' pointed translation (1974: 152).

[86] Revelation 21.2.

[87] Revelation 21.24.

[88] 'The glory of God is [the city's] light, and its lamp is the lamb' (Revelation 21.23).

'Truth' which in John and many liturgical texts denotes Christ (416:21-4):

"Ομοια θρεμμένη ἀπ' τῆς ἀέρινης
οὐρανικῆς 'Ιδέας τὰ στήθια
τινάζεται ὅλη σάρκα, ὅλη αἷμα,
μ' ἕνα περπάτημα γερὸ μιὰ 'Αλήθεια!

It is also significant here that through the image of the nurturing breasts of the κόρη who is also the City, the City is called 'the ethereal heavenly Idea'. Apart from the Platonic implications, this provides a further link with the 'new Jerusalem', described as καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ.[89]

There can be little doubt that Palamas has knowingly incorporated elements of the 'holy city' of the Apocalypse into the 'Celestial City' of the Gypsy's utopian vision.[90] But whereas the 'holy city' comes 'from God', the 'Celestial City' of the *Δωδεκάλογος* is the offspring of the Gypsy's music. Thus, in the appropriation of the 'new Jerusalem' Palamas assigns to his alter ego another creative role which in Biblical terms belongs to God.

In view of the formal parallels between the Gypsy and Tearless, and the Gypsy's clearly implied identification with Tearless, reference should be made to some of the appropriations of Christian language in Tearless' final speech at the end of Canto XI. Tearless applies to himself the language of God's promise to Jacob of abundant descendants,[91] and calls himself 'the Patriarch of the Race' (436:13). But he goes further, appropriating some of Christ's statements about himself. Having killed the king who had earlier plotted to have him killed, Tearless is offered the crown, which he spurns, saying (435:20-22).

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[89] Revelation 21.2.

[90] Eklund (1972: 52-3) sees a thematically consistent parallel between the descriptions of Constantinople in Canto I and Babylon in the Apocalypse.

[91] Compare 435:24-5 with Genesis 28.12-14.

Δὲν τὴ θέλω. Δὲν ἦρθα νὰ γίνω
σὲ ραγιάδες ραγιὰς βασιλιάς.
Ὁ λαός μου εἶν' ἀλλοῦ.

In the context of refusing a kingship, the last line here is a close parallel to Jesus' declaration to Pilate, ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου [. . .] οὐκ ἔστιν ἐντεῦθεν (this last phrase being synomymous with εἶν' ἀλλοῦ).[92] Tearless' statement of negative intent (Δὲν ἦρθα νὰ γίνω. . .) echoes Jesus statement of positive intent which follows in his dialogue with Pilate (in each the essential construction is ἔρχομαι νά / ἵνα):

> ἐγὼ εἰς τοῦτο γεγέννημαι καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἐλήλυθα εἰς τὸν κόσμον, ἵνα μαρτυρήσω τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.[93]

Furthermore, the line, σὲ ραγιάδες ραγιὰς βασιλιάς, parodies the Biblical title 'King of Kings' which is applied to Christ, first in the Apocalypse, and extensively in liturgical texts.[94]

Tearless is an unlikely Christ figure: he describes himself and his bride, Laughterless, as ταιριασμένοι τοῦ ὀλέθρου οἱ θεοί (435:15); his whole story is one of utterly ruthless pursuit of self-interest; and he likens

[92] John 18.36.

[93] John 18.37. There are many negative statements of this type in the Gospels, such as οὐ γὰρ ἦλθον ἵνα κρίνω τὸν κόσμον (John 12.47). See also Matthew 5.17, 10.34 and Mark 2.17. In Canto IV the Gypsy makes a positive statement of this type whose content is so anti-religious that it constitutes a direct challenge to all statements of Jesus about the purpose of his coming which take this form: ἦρθα ἐδῶ νὰ διαλαλήσω / βασιλιὰ θεὸ τὸ Τίποτε / στὸν αἰώνα ἐμπρὸς καὶ πίσω (340:22-4). Contrast in particular Matthew 5.17: μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφήτας. See also John 10.10 and 12.46-7.

[94] Revelation 17.14, 19.16. See also II Maccabees 13.4, III Maccabees 5.35 and I Timothy 6.15, where this title is used of God.

himself to Cain, cursed, in his case, for selling his parents (436:9-10). Unlike Cain, however, he is not dismayed by the curse but challenges God or Fate to punish him. The image of this punishment links Tearless once more to Christ, through a reverse transubstantiation whereby his blood becomes wine (436:11-12):

Πατητάδες, πατᾶτε με ἀλύπητα
γιὰ νὰ γίνῃ τ' ἁγνὸ τὸ κρασί [95]

It is precisely because both Tearless and the Gypsy are so un-Christ-like that their appropriations of language and imagery pertaining to Christ are poetically effective and potentially shocking. What is involved here is not the aspiration to be, or even the presumption of being, like Christ, but the desire to go beyond Christ, the denial of the values Christ embodies; and, from an authorial point of view, the attempt to set up rival figures, hybrids, perhaps, of Milton's Satan and Nietzsche's *Übermensch*: ὁ Γύφτος, ὁ Ἀδάκρυτος, ὁ Ἀρχοντάνθρωπος.

Such figures also appear in the *Φλογέρα*, as we shall see, but they are less prominent and their relation to Christ is, in most cases, less clear: the Apparition of the emperor's dream; even the emperor himself in his reply to the Apparition; the Rock of the Acropolis; and the Flute. But the Flute has no personality or destiny. It is the Gypsy's violin without the Gypsy, a pure projection of the poetic voice. It does, however, have views, and while, like the Gypsy, it denies all gods, it shows a marked preference for the pagan Greek culture and despises the Christian and Byzantine.

[95] This also reverses the imagery of the 'great wine press of the wrath of God': καὶ ἐπατήθη ἡ ληνὸς [. . .] καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αἷμα (Revelation 1.18-20). For Sikelianos' more extensive exploitation of the eucharistic equation of wine and blood see pp. 250-52, 257-64.

2.4 Christ and the Panagia in the *Φλογέρα*

'The whole of *Ἡ Φλογέρα τοῦ Βασιλιᾶ*, Palamas writes in 1933 (twenty-three years after its publication) 'unfolded from a song of only a few lines, of which I retain in my memory no line but the last:

Προσκύνησε τὴν Παναγιὰ μεσὰ στὸν Παρθενῶνα,

the germ-cell of the whole work.'[96] Employing a similar metaphor, in a lecture delivered in 1948, Karantonis speaks of the emperor's prayer before the Panagia in the Parthenon as one of 'the two principal elements ... in the magic seed from which the whole work sprouted'.[97] The other element is Pachymeres' account of the discovery, by soldiers of Michael VIII Palaeologus in the mid-thirteenth century, of the corpse of Basil II set upright against a wall with a shepherd's reed-pipe in its mouth. Karantonis is of course right to point to the double origin of the poem; and indeed, Palamas himself sets the relevant lines from Pachymeres, together with a passage from Cedrenus referring, briefly, to Basil's worship of the Theotokos in Athens, as twin epigraphs to the twelve cantos of the *Φλογέρα*.[98] But it would, I think, be fair to say, in defence of Palamas' reference to a *single* 'germ-cell', that it was the potent image of a Byzantine emperor prostrating himself before an icon of the Virgin Mary in the Parthenon— formerly the temple of the virgin goddess Athena— which served as the seed of the whole of the *content* of the poem, while the image of the shepherd's reed-pipe in the mouth of the same emperor's corpse served as the seed of its *form*.

I use the word 'form' in relation to the work's narrative structure, rather than to its genre or verse-type. The thirteenth-century narrative of the

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[96] Palamas 1962-69: X, 539.

[97] Karantonis 1979: 193-4.

[98] Palamas 1962-69: V, 25.

finding of the emperor's corpse occupies only the first two thirds of Canto I and the whole of the extremely short Canto XII, a total of seven pages in the *Ἅπαντα*. The unnamed narrator of this primary narrative is the Poet, and he is addressing the reader. (This is not made explicit: I am invoking the default-situation of poetry as discourse.) Within the primary narrative Palamas brings to life the reed-pipe (henceforth 'the Flute')[99] and its 'song' becomes the means by which the emperor's story is related. The 114 pages between the two blocks of this primary narrative constitute, ostensibly, the Flute's song, although there are ambiguities in Cantos II and III, which make the distinction between the Poet's voice and that of the Flute uncertain, ambiguities probably rooted in the poem's protracted period of gestation (1886-1910).[100] The Flute's song is in one sense a part of the primary narrative, since the Flute is, as it were, a character in that narrative. In the terms of the primary narrative, the Flute's song is uttered in the year 1261, when the army of Michael VIII is poised to retake Constantinople from the Franks, and addressed to Michael VIII's soldiers and to the corpse of Basil II, in whose mouth the Flute finds itself. The Flute is also of course a literary

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[99] Beaton has pointed out (1994: 86, n.55) that 'flute', though an established translation of φλογέρα in this context, is inaccurate and misleading. I have retained it here only because 'the Reed-Pipe' or 'the Shepherd's Pipe' seemed too strange and cumbersome for the name of the poem's principal 'voice', to which I must refer repeatedly.

[100] The Flute's first speech at the end of Canto I is bounded typographically by dashes at 32:1 and 35:2 (see the following note). Since there is no opening dash at the beginning of Canto II, the logical conclusion is that the poet's voice has resumed the narration. However, there are no typographical or other indications of a change of speaker in the last paragraph of Canto II, which clearly belongs to the Flute's voice (46:33). A similar ambiguity exists in Canto III, where the injunction two thirds of the way through the Canto, Πίσω στὰ χίλια δεκοχτώ (54:12), only makes sense if understood as the Poet addressing the Flute which has at that point been silent again since the end of Canto II. The Flute clearly announces its presence a few lines later (54:20). These ambiguities are probably the result of careless editing, when Palamas was blending together passages first drafted at different stages in the development of the overall structure

device— the means by which Palamas conveys to the reader the eleventh-century narrative of Basil II's pilgrimage to Athens— but not a *mere* literary device like the *κιθάρα* (here the ancient cithara) which the Poet invokes in the separate, prefatory narrative, 'The Widow's Son'. The cithara is purely a rhetorical conceit (it has no identity on any level of narrative), a conceit which allows the Poet to address himself, and to manage, somewhat heavy-handedly, the transitions at the beginning and end of a long flashback (18:23 and 21:1-2).[101]

The Flute's song constitutes a secondary narrative, the story of Basil's journey to Athens and worship of the Panagia in the Parthenon, set in the year 1018. But within the Flute's narrative there are many other voices, such as those of Parnassus, of the Rock of the Acropolis, of Proclus and the storks and Athena, and of Basil himself. Some of these voices, the voices of characters within the Flute's narrative, deliver their own tertiary narratives; and within some of these there are yet other voices some of which have their own fourth-level narratives. The voice of the Flute itself is, therefore, heard only intermittently in the course of its song, and it is heard for the last time one third of the way through Canto IX, where it introduces the emperor's address to the Virgin in the Parthenon. That address takes up the last two thirds of Canto IX and the whole of Cantos X and XI, and when Basil falls silent, so does the Flute. There is no closing narrative comment. In terms of the secondary narrative the emperor is left forever standing in front of the image of the Virgin, for, at the opening of Canto XII, the Poet's voice immediately resumes the primary narrative.

It is a common failing of critical discussions of the *Φλογέρα* that passages cited are not related to the hierarchy of voices. Many critics do not seem to regard it as important to consider to which voice the passages they

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101 Page and line references (in this case to Vol. V of the *Ἅπαντα*) as for the *Δωδεκάλογος* (see p.64 n.68).

choose to comment on belong. It seems to me, however, that awareness of the voice is often vital to the understanding of a passage, and of its function in the economy of the poem as a whole. It is particularly important not to treat the voice of the Flute as though it was the voice of the Poet. 'The Poet', as narrator of the primary, thirteenth-century narrative, may legitimately be thought of as a mask or persona distinguishable from the poet as author, i.e. Kostis Palamas. The Flute, as a character within the Poet's narrative, is yet further removed from Palamas. Palamas himself, in his synopsis of Canto I, speaks of the Poet's identification not with the Flute, but with the emperor, and of 'the inspiration of the poet and the soul of the emperor bound indissolubly in an atmosphere of visionary dream, composed of both actual and metaphysical elements'.[102] Nevertheless, the Flute, in its repeated characterization of its own words as τραγούδι, is manifestly the principal embodiment within the *Φλογέρα* (as the Gypsy is in the *Δωδεκάλογος*) of the poetic voice, the principal projection of the poetic ego. Palamas' failure to acknowledge this suggests that the Flute, like the Gypsy, was one of the creations with which Palamas, as public figure and national poet, felt less than comfortable. Both Flute and Gypsy represent the unrestrained imagination which knows no authority greater than its own voice.

If the overall purpose of the poem is to celebrate a synthesis of all the stages of Greek culture (pagan-classical, Christian-Byzantine and modern)— and this is how it has generally been received[103]— then the Flute must be

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[102] Palamas 1962-69: V, 520. The synopses of the twelve cantos were added in the second edition of 1920.

[103] Papanoutsos (1971: 18) calls it 'the epic par excellence of Greek continuity'. Tomadakis (1959: 61) speaks of elements in the poem as expressions of 'national unity' or of 'the unity of Greek life'. Beaton (1994: 89-90) speaks more guardedly in terms of an 'attempted synthesis of the ancient monuments and the living present, of pagan belief and Christianity, of Athens and Constantinople (the "twin centres" of Hellenism for the nineteenth century), of the classical and Byzantine heritages'.

seen as a dissenting voice, which persists in viewing the displacement of classical culture by Byzantine Christianity as a radical *dis*continuity which can only be healed by the re-emergence of classical values. If this was, as seems to have been the case, an element of Palamas' own view, then the synthesis at which the poem aims cannot but be flawed. The *Φλογέρα* is a more problematic work than is generally recognized, embodying contradictory and irreconcilable points of view. Critical attention needs to be diverted away from its supposed synthesis and towards the active dialectic of its voices.[104]

I shall make no attempt to discuss all the allusions to Biblical, liturgical and apocryphal texts in the *Φλογέρα*. The considerable extent of Palamas' use of such texts may be gauged from the chapter devoted to ἐκκλησιαστικά, ἀπόκρυφα καὶ συναξαριακὰ κείμενα in Kasinis' investigation of the Greek sources of the *Φλογέρα*.[105] Kasinis' work is thorough, if not exhaustive, but the interpretative significance of Palamas' handling of the sources is outside its scope, and it rarely goes beyond identifying sources and demonstrating their relevance through the juxtaposition of excerpts from the sources with excerpts from Palamas. The sources to which I shall be referring may be assumed to have been identified by Kasinis unless otherwise stated; and I shall not cite Kasinis except where I want to comment on his treatment of the evidence.

In this section I shall concentrate on a small number of passages, most of which are dependent in both form and content on Byzantine hymnography, and which provide further evidence of the first three of the five tendencies already observed in Palamas' handling of Christian texts and subjects in the early poems: the marginalization of Jesus, the focus on female figures, and theological contentiousness. The fourth tendency, the

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[104] See also Hirst 1998: 108.

[105] Kasinis 1980: 243-322.

eroticization of Biblical figures, is not present in the *Φλογέρα*. The fifth, the assimilation of Christian themes and figures to classical mythology, is occasionally evident, but more typical of the *Φλογέρα* is the assertion of an antagonistic relationship between classical and Christian or Byzantine values (the radical discontinuity referred to above).

Considering the essentially Christian setting, and the length of the poem, it is remarkable how few references to Christ there are in the *Φλογέρα*. And most of these are passing references of little significance: periphrastic descriptions of Christianity as the 'faith of Christ'; conventional religious phrases such as 'mercy of the Lord'; references to the child in the arms of the Panagia. Only once is the name of Christ linked with that of any other voice or figure of the poem (apart from the Panagia), when the Flute tells Basil that, though a ruler, he is 'a slave of Christ' (34:28).

The emperor is, however, presented throughout as a devotee of the Panagia rather than of Christ, ταμένος [. . .] στῆς Παναγιᾶς τὴ χάρη (51:28). In the description of the emperor's ascetic practices, Christ is referred to only obliquely: the emperor wears an amulet which contains some of the τίμιο Ξύλο (the wood of the Cross) (51:26-7). When he wishes to give thanks for his victories, the only question is under which of her names and in which of her sanctuaries he will worship the Panagia (52:33—53:35). He chooses the Δέσποινα τῶν οὐρανῶν 'who has built her castle on the rock of Athens' (54:1-2). The mosaic image in the Christianized Parthenon is not a Virgin and Child: the Virgin is ὁλόρθη [. . .] μήτε παιδὶ στὴν ἀγκαλιά. Μόνη (114:22). The Child is present only as an image within an image: on the Virgin's breast there is a talisman ποὺ ζωγραφίζει τὸ Χριστό, τ' ὁλόγλυκο παιδί της. This pendant is presented as a weapon, comparable to, and effective against, the Gorgon's head in the hands of the statue of Athena which the Virgin's image has replaced (54:3-

11).[106]

Only once in his long speech before this image, in the very last line, does the emperor invoke Christ (or God the Father, since Κύριος may denote either) (145:13):

"Ημαρτον, Κύριε! "Ας γενῇ κατὰ τὸ θέλημά σου.

Kasinis refers to Christ's prayer in Gethsemane (γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου) as the source of the second part of the line,[107] but a more obvious source is, surely, the Lord's Prayer, where this same phrase occurs.[108] However, the syntax of Palamas' line also owes something to the Virgin's reply to Gabriel at the Annunciation:

ἰδοὺ ἡ δούλη Κυρίου· γένοιτό μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμά σου.[109]

Here we have, as in Palamas, the construction with κατά. Furthermore, the preceding clause here ends with Κυρίου, and in Palamas' text with Κύριε. Thus, when for a moment Palamas has the emperor address God rather than the Virgin, he has him do so in a line modelled on Mary's response at the Annunciation, in words associated as closely and definitively with the Virgin as the Χαῖρε itself.

What one might call a specific technique for the marginalization of Christ and the transfer of focus to the Virgin is evident in Palamas' systematic distortion of the meaning of the liturgical excerpts which he

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[106] According to the Storks of the Acropolis, Athena has been displaced by μιὰ δέσποιν' ἄλλη [. . .] μ' ἕνα παιδὶ στὴν ἀγκαλιά (101:27—103:4): a contradictory statement only if it is taken as referring to the image in the Parthenon rather than to a mythologized Virgin actively engaged in expelling Athena from her temple.

[107] Kasinis 1980: 264-5; Matthew 26.42.

[108] Matthew 6.10.

[109] Luke 1.38.

adapts for incorporation into the emperor's speech.

Tsatsos refers to this speech as a 'confession' (ἐξομολόγησις),[110] while Palamas speaks of it, in his synopses of Cantos IX and XI, as a 'prayer' (δέησις).[111] Most of its lines are not immediately recognizable as prayer; nor is it a confession— not at any rate in the ecclesiastical sense— since, except in the first and last paragraphs of Canto XI, the penitential aspect is lacking. It consists for the most part, at least in Cantos IX and X, of the emperor's account of his own life: epic, self-aggrandizing, sometimes arrogant; while in Canto XI (between the opening and closing penitential paragraphs) the emperor relates what was spoken to him by an Apparition which came to him at an earlier time in a dream, and what he replied, within the dream, to the Apparition.

The speech is basically a first- and third-person narrative with occasional second-person apostrophes to abstractions or to characters within that narrative. But the narrative is punctuated by brief passages of direct address to the Virgin in the second person. These are of three kinds: (1) elements of personal praise or supplication which arise from the narrative and are integrated into narrative paragraphs; (2) relatively extended prayers presented as separate paragraphs (the two penitential prayers already noted and the hymn of praise, listing many of the Virgin's liturgical titles, which concludes Canto X); (3) brief interjections of praise presented as separate paragraphs of one, two or three lines, couched in liturgical language and without close thematic connection to the adjacent narrative. Karantonis calls these paragraphs 'fervid devotional exclamations to the Theotokos';[112] I shall call them 'acclamations'. There are ten such acclamations, nine in Canto IX and one in Canto X. They are based, and most of them very closely

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[110] Tsatsos 1936: 195.

[111] Palamas 1962-69: V. 522-3.

[112] Karantonis 1979: 205-6.

based, on excerpts from Byzantine hymnography, drawn mainly from the Canon in the Ἀκολουθία τοῦ Ἀκαθίστου Ὕμνου or from the Akathistos Hymn itself. The tenth and last acclamation, though forming a separate paragraph (126: 31-2), is more akin in content to the personal supplications in the first category, and I shall not discuss it. The first and eighth acclamations are discussed later in a different context.[113] Here I shall discuss the remaining seven acclamations from Canto IX, in order.[114]

The first acclamation addresses the Virgin as 'conqueror of Athena',[115] and her military role is further emphasized in the second (117:17-18):

> Στὸν πόλεμο ὁδηγήτρα Ἐσύ, μεσίτρα στὴν εἰρήνη,
> Ὑπέρμαχη Στρατήγισσα, σ' Ἐσὲ τὰ νικητήρια !

There is an indisputable source for the second line in the *kontakion* which precedes the Akathistos Hymn:[116]

> Τῇ Ὑπερμάχῳ Στρατηγῷ τὰ νικητήρια, ὡς λυτρωθεῖσα τῶν δεινῶν εὐχαριστήρια, ἀναγράφω σοι ἡ Πόλις σου, Θεοτόκε.

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[113] See pp.108-10.

[114] Most of the sources for the acclamations which I cite below have already been identified not only by Kasinis but also by Xydis (1978: 191-4). Neither author goes beyond demonstrating a relation between poetic text and liturgical source through juxtaposition of extracts. It is necessary to set out the extracts yet again here in order to analyse the relation between the acclamations and their sources, and to demonstrate that this relation is not as simple or harmonious as one might suppose from reading Kasinis or Xydis.

[115] See p.108.

[116] As a current liturgical term 'kontakion' refers to something distinct from, though not unrelated to, the earlier liturgical genre of the kontakion, of which the Akathistos Hymn is itself an example. When used as a liturgical term it is always italicized in this thesis. As a the name of a literary genre it has wider currency in English because of the interest in the kontakia of Romanos, and when it is used in this sense it is not italicized. See also pp.20-21.

This was written to celebrate the liberation of Constantinople, besieged by Persians and Avars, through the supposed miraculous powers of an icon of the Virgin, in 626. Στὸν πόλεμο ὁδηγήτρα, in the first line of Palamas' acclamation, is thematically, though not linguistically, connected with this *kontakion*; but, more significantly, it involves a misuse of the title Ὁδηγήτρια. This is not primarily a liturgical title of the Virgin but the name of an icon type. Even though the name derives from the Μονὴ Ὁδηγῶν in Constantinople where the original icon of this type was housed, the type is usually interpreted as showing the Virgin as 'Guide' to Christ, since it depicts her holding the infant in her left arm and pointing to him with her right hand. By using ὁδηγήτρα in a military sense Palamas diverts attention from the Virgin's relation to Christ.[117]

Palamas balances 'leader in war' with 'mediatrix in peace'. Kasinis suggests that the source of Palamas' use of the word μεσίτρα is to be found in the third *exaposteilarion* at the end of the Service of the Greater Supplicatory Canon:

> Καὶ σὲ μεσίτριαν ἔχω πρὸς τὸν φιλάνθρωπον Θεόν.

There are, however, other possible sources. The *kontakion* in the same Service addresses the Virgin as μεσιτεία πρὸς τὸν Ποιητὴν ἀμετάθετε, while the fourth *megalynarion* in the Service of the Lesser Supplicatory Canon uses both the noun μεσίτρια (which bears the same relation to Palamas' μεσίτρα as Ὁδηγήτρια does to his ὁδηγήτρα) and the cognate verb:

> Δέσποινα καὶ Μήτηρ τοῦ Λυτρωτοῦ, δέξαι παρακλήσεις ἀναξίων σῶν ἱκετῶν, ἵνα μεσιτεύσῃς πρὸς τὸν ἐκ σοῦ

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117 The icon has only a circumstantial connection with the Byzantine idea, taken up by Palamas, of the Virgin as 'leader in war': in some accounts of the events of 626 the miraculous icon is identified as the Ὁδηγήτρια.

τεχθέντα. Ὦ Δέσποινα τοῦ κόσμου, γενοῦ μεσίτρια.

Furthermore, the sixth *megalynarion* concerns the icon of the Ὁδηγήτρια:

Ἄλαλα τὰ χείλη [. . .] τῶν μὴ προσκυνούντων τὴν Εἰκόνα σου [. . .] τὴν Ὁδηγήτριαν.

The proximity of the words μεσίτρια and Ὁδηγήτρια strongly suggests that these *megalynaria* provided Palamas with the idea for the first line of the second acclamation. But Palamas has removed both words from their theological context in associating them with 'peace' and 'war' respectively, and thus removed the connection between the Virgin and Christ which they entail: as Ὁδηγήτρια the Virgin holds and points to Christ, and as 'mediatrix' in the texts cited she mediates 'with the man-loving God', 'with the Creator', or 'with him that was born of [her]'. 'Leader in war' is given meaning by the reference to the Ὑπέρμαχος Στρατηγός in the next line, but 'mediatrix in peace' remains an isolated phrase, devoid of specific significance; and contrasted with 'leader in war', it seems to refer only to the Virgin's intervention in human affairs.

The Virgin's role as mediatrix with Christ is dependent on her primary role as Theotokos. The greater part of the imagery found in Orthodox hymns and prayers to the Virgin is incarnational imagery. It speaks of, or addresses, the Virgin in terms which convey her primary role in the *economia* of salvation: the means by which God became man. In making use of this imagery Palamas shows a consistent tendency to obscure or remove the incarnational references. Where he allows references or allusions to Christ to remain they are references to Christ as Child, and not to Christ as Saviour.

Consider the third acclamation (118:26-8):

Μ' ἐσὲ ξημέρωσε ἡ χαρὰ καὶ σβεῖ ἡ κατάρα, πῆρε
μ' ἐσέ, Μητέρα, κι ὁ θεὸς τὴν ὁμορφιὰ τοῦ Βρέφους,
κι ὁ γέρος κόσμος ἄλλαξε καὶ νιὸς ξαναστυλώθη.

All the ideas and most of the words here are derived from the Akathistos Hymn (*oikos* 1):

> Χαῖρε, δι' ἧς ἡ χαρὰ ἐκλάμψει· χαῖρε δι' ἧς ἡ ἀρὰ ἐκλείψει.
> . . . . . .
> Χαῖρε, δι' ἧς νεουργεῖται ἡ κτίσις· χαῖρε, δι' ἧς βρεφουργεῖται ὁ Κτίστης.

The repeated δι' ἧς emphasizes the secondary role of the Virgin. She is seen as the vehicle through whom salvation is effected, but not as the agent of salvation. The imprecision of Palamas' μ' ἐσέ obscures this, as is particularly evident when he transforms the very direct statement of the Incarnation ('Hail, [to you] through whom the Creator is made an infant') into something much more diffuse: 'with you, Mother, even God took on the beauty of the Infant'. This feels like an evasion of the doctrine of Incarnation, according to which God took on not the 'beauty' but the *body* of an infant.

In this third acclamation Palamas obscures the incarnational imagery. More frequently, though, he removes it altogether, either by transferring the reference of key elements of the imagery in his sources from Christ to the Virgin, or by simply omitting those elements which refer, directly or indirectly, to Christ.

The fourth acclamation (119:13-15) provides examples of the transfer of imagery:

> Σκέπη τοῦ κόσμου πιὸ πλατιὰ ἀπ' τὸν κόσμο, στὸ σκοτάδι
> πύρινε στύλε ὁδηγητή, καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς λιμάνι,
> καὶ ποταμὲ ποὺ μᾶς κυλᾶς τὸ μέλι καὶ τὸ γάλα!

The images here are all derived from the Akathistos Hymn, and most of them from *oikos* 11:

> Χαῖρε, πύρινε στῦλε, ὁδηγῶν τοὺς ἐν σκότει· χαῖρε, σκέπη τοῦ κόσμου, πλατυτέρα νεφέλης.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Χαῖρε, ἡ Γῆ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας· χαῖρε, ἐξ ἧς ῥέει μέλι καὶ γάλα.

Palamas' first two images have been taken over almost unchanged. The fiery pillar has no obvious incarnational connotation, since the image does not in itself exhibit the two parts, usually denoting container and contained, typical of incarnational imagery. The primary reference is to the OT, to the story of the Exodus from Egypt, and it is only when the source is recollected that the incarnational implications emerge, for the Lord was *in* the pillar of fire:

> ὁ δὲ Θεὸς ἡγεῖτο αὐτῶν, ἡμέρας μὲν ἐν στύλῳ νεφέλης, δεῖξαι αὐτοῖς τὴν ὁδόν, τὴν δὲ νύκτα ἐν στύλῳ πυρός.[118]

Similarly, 'shelter of the world' is not in itself an incarnational image. Palamas increases the stature of the Virgin by making this shelter, or covering, 'broader than the world' instead of 'broader than a cloud', but in so doing weakens the image, replacing something very graphic with something more abstract and difficult to visualize, and obscuring the double reference to Exodus, where the pillar of fire by night became a pillar of cloud by day. The pillar of cloud was a shelter or protection (compare σκέπη) as well as a guide to the Israelites, for, as they approached the Red Sea, 'the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel'.[119] The Akathistos Hymn, by associating σκέπη with νεφέλη, gives incarnational undertones to an image which is not in itself incarnational, but this is not carried over into Palamas' text.

Palamas has made a more radical alteration to the source to arrive at

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[118] Exodus 13.21.

[119] Exodus 14.19-20.

his 'river which brings [literally 'rolls'] to us milk and honey'. In the Hymn, the Virgin is addressed not as a river but as 'the Promised Land from which flows milk and honey'. Again the reference is to the OT,[120] but here the incarnational intent of the imagery is clear: the Virgin is the Promised Land, Christ the milk and honey which flows from her. The intermediate term, the river or rivers filled with milk and honey, is missing. Palamas could have derived the image of the river from a line in *oikos* 21 of the Akathistos Hymn (a potential source not noted by Kasinis):

χαῖρε, ὅτι τὸν πολύρρυτον ἀναβλύζεις ποταμόν.

This is, however, consistent with the Promised Land imagery: again the Virgin is hailed as the source of that which flows, not the flux itself. Palamas' line substitutes for the clear distinction between a land and that which flows *from* it, the much hazier distinction between a river and that which flows *in* it, or is carried along *by* it. Again the incarnational implication has been obscured, through a conflation of liturgical images, and a transfer of imagery, making the river stand for the Virgin and not Christ.

What is, at first sight, a clearer displacement of imagery, is found in Palamas' remaining image, the 'haven of the soul'. Kasinis refers this to *oikos* 5 of the Akathistos Hymn:[121]

χαῖρε, ὅτι λιμένα τῶν ψυχῶν ἑτοιμάζεις.

In this the Virgin is not herself the 'haven of souls'. Instead, she 'makes ready the haven', and the haven must therefore signify Christ. In this case, however, there are liturgical precedents for the transfer of imagery.[122]

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120 Exodus 3.17, 13.5, in conjunction with Hebrews 11.9.

121 Kasinis 1980: 275.

122 Two examples, neither noted by Kasinis: from the Akathistos Hymn (*oikos* 17): χαῖρε, λιμὴν τῶν τοῦ βίου πλωτήρων, and from the Akathistos Canon (Ode 6, *troparion* 3): λιμὴν ἡμῖν γενοῦ θαλαττεύουσι. Both are addressed to the Virgin.

In the penitential prayer at the very end of the emperor's long address to the Virgin, the image of the haven occurs again (145:5-6):

> Παρακαλῶ σε, Παναγιά, βαθὺς ὁ πόνος μου εἶναι.
> λιμάνι ἐσὺ τοῦ ἁμαρτωλοῦ, χαρὰ τοῦ κόσμου ὑπάρχεις.

Of the parallels offered by Kasinis[123] this, from the third *idiomelon* after the Canon in Orthros for Wednesday in Holy Week, seems to be the closest, since it brings together the concept of sin and the image of the haven:

> Ἡ βεβυθισμένη τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ εὗρέ σε λιμένα σωτηρίας.

The subject here is ἡ ἁμαρτωλός from the preceding *idiomelon*, that is, 'the woman [. . .] who was a sinner' who anointed Christ's feet;[124] and, as Kasinis points out, the words are addressed to Christ and not to the Virgin, so that if this is Palamas' source we have a very clear example of the transfer of imagery. Palamas' choice of the phrase τοῦ ἁμαρτωλοῦ suggests that he did have these *idiomela* in mind when he composed the lines in question.

Palamas' evasion of the incarnational imagery of his sources by selective omission can be illustrated in the fifth acclamation (120:30-31):

> Ἀγνὸ βιβλίο καὶ ζωντανὸ ποὺ τὄχει σφραγισμένο
> τὸ Πνέμα, ρόδο ἀμάραντο, πύρινε θρόνε, χαῖρε !

Here Palamas has adapted the following extracts from the Akathistos Canon (Ode 1, *troparia* 1, 2 and 3):

> Χριστοῦ βίβλον ἔμψυχον, ἐσφραγισμένην σὲ Πνεύματι, ὁ μέγας Ἀρχάγγελος, Ἁγνή, θεώμενος, ἐπεφώνει σοι.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> χαῖρε θρόνε πύρινε τοῦ Παντοκράτορος
>
> . . . . . .

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123 Kasinis 1980: 296-7.

124 Luke 7.37-8.

Ῥόδον τὸ ἀμάραντον, χαῖρε, ἡ μόνη βλαστήσασα.

In each case Palamas has suppressed the reference to Christ. The 'living book of Christ' has become 'pure and living book' (ἁγνό which replaces 'Christ' coming from ἁγνή addressed to the Virgin in the Canon), and the 'fiery throne of the Pantocrator' has become simply 'the fiery throne'. With the 'rose that does not wither' the situation is more complicated, since the line from the Akathistos Hymn can be read in two ways. There is a widespread and long-established tendency to read it as 'Hail, Rose that does not wither, the only one to bloom', taking the feminine ἡ μόνη βλαστήσασα as *constructio ad sensum* and in apposition to ῥόδον, understood as nominative.[125] It is this reading, presumably, which gave rise to the use of Ῥόδον τὸ ἀμάραντον as a title of the Virgin associated with a particular icon type.[126] However, it seems to me more likely that the 'rose that does not wither' and the 'fragrant apple' in the following syntactically parallel expression in the Canon (τὸ μῆλον τὸ εὔοσμον, χαῖρε, ἡ τέξασα) are both accusative and refer to Christ; and that the line should be read, 'Hail, you who alone brought forth the rose that does not wither'.[127] What Palamas has done with this image depends on how he read the line. If he read the 'rose' as the Virgin then he has omitted the part of the image which which connects her with Christ (the reference to blooming); if he read the 'rose' as Christ then he has transferred the image to the Virgin, as we have seen him do in other cases.[128]

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[125] Compare, from the same Canon (Ode 3, *troparion* 3), Ὄρθρος φαεινός, χαῖρε, ἡ μόνη τὸν ἥλιον φέρουσα Χριστόν.

[126] See Xydis 1978: 196.

[127] Modern translators agree: for example, 'Hail, from whom alone there springs the unfading Rose; hail for thou hast borne the sweetly smelling apple' (Mary & Ware 1978: 248).

[128] Both Sikelianos and Elytis seem to have read 'rose' as denoting the Virgin, or, at least, they have applied the image of the ῥόδον τὸ ἀμάραντον to female figures in their

The Akathistos Canon also includes a variant form of the image of the 'rose that does not wither' (Ode 7, Troparion 2):

ἡ ῥάβδος ἡ μυστική, ἄνθος τὸ ἀμάραντον ἡ ἐξανθήσασα.

Here there is little scope for misreading. The Virgin is the mystic rod which produces the flower; and the flower is Christ. Palamas appropriates this image essentially unchanged in the sixth acclamation (121:6-7):

Φύτρωσες, βέργα μυστική, τὸ ἀμάραντο λουλούδι,
ἄρμα του 'Εσένα διάλεξε κι ὁ νοητὸς ὁ ἥλιος.

This acclamation is something of an exception, since both lines retain the incarnational structure of the imagery. This is not, however, to say that Palamas understood, or wanted the reader to understand, *his* images (the appropriated images as they appear in the poem) in an incarnational sense. In the first case he may have been more aware of the ultimate source of the image in Aaron's rod which 'sprouted and put forth buds, and produced blossoms and [. .] bore ripe almonds',[129] than of its incarnational significance in the context of the Canon.

The second line of the sixth acclamation is also derived from Ode 7 of the Canon (*troparion* 1):

Χαῖρε, ὄχημα Ἡλίου τοῦ νοητοῦ.

In the Canon, the 'intelligible sun' (that is, the sun knowable only to the mind, as distinct from the perceptible sun in the sky) refers primarily to Christ.[130] In Palamas' work in general the sun is more often a symbol of Apollo than of Christ. But even Apollo, 'golden-crowned, archer, lyre-

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poetry associated with the Virgin (see pp.179, 316-17).

129 Numbers 17.8.

130 The same liturgical phrase is exploited by Elytis (see p.351 n.184).

player, charioteer' is repudiated by the Apparition which confronts the emperor. In the Apparition's vision of the future state of the world it is the Sun (not Christ, not Apollo, but the sun itself, perceptible to the senses, source of light and heat) which will be 'leader of the dance' in company with the 'only gods' remaining, Athena and Aphrodite (141:10-19). The radical ambiguity of sun imagery in a Greek context, and especially in Palamas' own work, may explain why he has taken over this image unchanged despite its reference to Christ in the context of the Canon. Palamas would also have been aware that in speaking of the 'chariot of the sun' the author of the Canon was drawing on classical rather than his more usual OT sources.

Further unmistakable examples of the transfer of imagery from Christ to the Virgin are found in the seventh and ninth acclamations. The seventh (122:4-5) reads as follows:

Ὅπου ἔσταξες, τὸ γιάτρεψες τὸ φλόγισμα τοῦ εἰδώλου.
Δροσιά, γιὰ Σένα κι ὁ ὕμνος μου σ' αἰῶνες τῶν αἰώνων.

The source of the image of the dew is undoubtedly Ode 6 of the Akathistos Canon (*troparion* 2):

Ἐκ σοῦ ἡ δρόσος ἀπέσταξε, φλογμὸν πολυθείας ἡ λύσασα.

The Canon addresses the Virgin, not as the dew, but as that from which the dew falls; and λύσασα agrees in case with δρόσος and not with σοῦ: hence, both 'dew' and 'destroyer of the flame of poytheism' signify Christ, and not the Virgin, as in Palamas' adaptation.[131]

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131 Palamas' transformation of the *destruction* of 'the flame of polytheism' into the *healing* of the 'inflammation of the idol' is curious, to say the least. He has presumably, and plausibly, read φλογμόν in a metaphorical sense as 'fever heat' rather than simply 'flame'. Even so, it appears that he is trying to tone down the anti-pagan sentiment, though this is something he does not do in the first and eighth acclamations (see pp.108-10).

The ninth acclamation is a single line, the closing line of Canto IX (123:35):

Ψηλότερη ἀπ' τοὺς οὐρανούς, τῆς γῆς τὸ θέμελο εἶσαι.

The obvious source is once more the Akathistos Canon (Ode 4, *troparion* 3):

Οὐρανῶν ὑψηλότερα, χαῖρε, γῆς τὸ θεμέλιον ἐν τῇ σῇ νηδύι.
Ἄχραντε, ἀκόπως βαστάσασα.

Both Kasinis and Xydis seriously distort the meaning of this line from the Canon by incomplete quotation. Their citations end with the word θεμέλιον (apparently vocative), and thus give the impression that the Virgin is addressed, as in Palamas, as 'earth's foundation'.[132] In the Canon the foundation (accusative) of the earth is of course Christ, whom the Virgin 'untiringly bears in [her] womb'. As well as illustrating transfer of imagery, Palamas' adaptation of this source also involves the omission of an explicit reference to the physiological aspect of Incarnation.

What emerges from the examination of these acclamations is a pronounced tendency to tone down, to make ambiguous, or to remove, references to Christ, to the Virgin's role in the Incarnation and her place in the *economia* more generally, which are present in the liturgical sources. The Christ Child is excluded, the Virgin takes centre stage. Palamas does not accept Christian theology as a given, but is seen again to be in contention with it. It is clear that Palamas wants to detach the Virgin from her theological context, to present her as more of an independent deity. The Christianity of the *Φλογέρα* is the religion of the Virgin rather than the religion of Christ. This is true both of the religion attacked by the Flute for having supplanted the worship of Athena and of the religion of the Emperor which finds expression in his speech to the icon of the Virgin, and in

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132 Kasinis 1980: 279; Xydis 1978: 193.

particular in the acclamations.

Palamas' adaptations of liturgical language in the acclamations are less than successful, precisely because of his suppression of the incarnational content of the imagery he appropriates. Whether or not one believes in the Incarnation, the idea that the Creator of the universe entered the womb of a village girl, grew there and was born as an infant into the world he created makes a powerful appeal to the imagination. The attempts of Byzantine hymnographers to express this extraordinary idea gave rise to a wealth of striking and effective imagery, always involving the two elements, the container and the contained, the producer and the produced, etc. The paradox, whether or not it is made explicit in the language of the hymns, that the Mother who bears the Son bears her own Creator— Dante's 'figlia del tuo figlio'[133]— is always present to the Christian mind. Palamas' adaptations, and his application of the imagery to the Virgin alone, deprive the images of the tension which gives them such imaginative force in their original context.

From the acclamations, in which the Panagia is clearly distanced from Christ and her role in the *economia*, I turn now to a hymn of praise in which the emperor, even through the appropriation of Biblical language, seems to raise the Panagia to the status of a supreme deity.

In the ninth acclamation the Virgin is addressed as 'higher than the heavens, foundation of the earth', and in the emperor's hymn of praise at the end of Canto X the cosmic imagery is more graphic (131:18-24):

> Τὸ οὐράνιο τόξο ζώνη σου. Πιὸ διάπλατη, πιὸ πλούσια
> πλημμύρισες τὸν οὐρανό, σημάδι ἐσὺ πιὸ μέγα.
> Φορεῖς τὸν ἥλιο φόρεμα, σκαμνί σου τὸ φεγγάρι
> γιὰ ν' ἀκουμπᾶς τὰ πόδια σου, καὶ γύρω στὰ μαλλιά σου
> στεφάνι δωδεκάστερο. Καὶ δέρνουν τὰ πλευρά σου

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133 *Paradiso* 33.1

φτερούγια σὰν τοῦ σταυραϊτοῦ, μὲ κεῖνα γιὰ να τρέχῃς
ἀπ' τῆς παράδεισος τὸ φῶς στῆς κόλασης τὴ νύχτα.

Most of this imagery is entirely appropriate to the Virgin Mary. It belongs to the woman who 'brought forth a male child, one who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron', and it is taken over, very little changed, from the Apocalypse:

Καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ὤφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, γυνὴ περιβεβλημένη τὸν ἥλιον, καὶ ἡ σελήνη ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς στέφανος ἀστέρων δώδεκα [. . .] καὶ ἐδόθησαν τῇ γυναικὶ δύο πτέρυγες τοῦ ἀετοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου, ἵνα πέτηται εἰς τὴν ἔρημον.[134]

But this 'woman clothed with the sun' was in 'the pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery'. A 'great red dragon' stood before her 'that he might devour her child [. . .] but her child was caught up to God and his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God'. By detaching the imagery from its narrative context Palamas has altered and enhanced its significance. The woman of the Apocalypse is briefly transfigured in the act of giving birth because of the importance of the child she bears, but afterwards has to seek refuge in the wilderness. In Palamas the sun and moon and stars seem to belong to the Panagia in her own right; and he adds a detail which contradicts all the spatial elements of the apocalyptic narrative: she fills (lit. 'floods', or 'overflows') heaven. There is no room in this vision for 'God . . . and his throne'; and indeed in the OT filling or overflowing heaven is a property of God himself:

μὴ οὐχὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν ἐγὼ πληρῶ; λέγει Κύριος.[135]

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[134] Revelation 12.1, 14.

[135] Jeremiah 23.24.

ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς οὐρανοῦ οὐκ ἀρκέσουσί σοι.[136]

And by a slight, but significant, change in the imagery— the moon is not simply 'under her feet' as in the Apocalypse, but is her 'footstool'— he appropriates to the Panagia an OT image which belongs to God:

Οὕτως λέγει Κύριος· ὁ οὐρανός μοι θρόνος, ἡ δὲ γῆ ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν μου.[137]

For Palamas the eagle's wings are not to carry the Virgin to a place of refuge, but to enable her travel from the 'light of paradise' to the 'night of hell'. Paradise and hell represent the extremes of height and depth as well as those of light and dark, and thus the last line of Canto X recalls the imagery of the last line of the previous Canto, 'higher than the heavens, foundation of the earth', imagery which is displaced from Christ to the Virgin. While Palamas is probably alluding, as Kasinis suggests, to the 'myth of the Panagia's journey to hell',[138] her presence in both paradise and hell also recalls a well known passage from the Psalms, which includes, in addition to the parallel antitheses of heaven-hell, light-dark, day-night, a reference to wings (belonging, though, in this case to the worshipper rather than the worshipped):

ἐὰν ἀναβῶ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν, σὺ ἐκεῖ εἶ, ἐὰν καταβῶ εἰς τὸν ᾅδην, πάρει· ἐὰν ἀναλάβοιμι τὰς πτέρυγάς μου κατ' ὄρθρον καὶ κατασκηνώσω εἰς τὰ ἔσχατα τῆς θαλάσσης, καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖ ἡ χείρ σου ὁδηγήσει με [...] καὶ εἶπα· ἄρα σκότος

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[136] III Kings (I Kings) 8.27: from Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple, and thematically relevant here since the emperor's hymn of praise follows his description of all the adornments which he is about to commission for the temple in which he is standing.

[137] Isaiah 66.1, quoted in Matthew 5.34 and Acts 7.49.

[138] Kasinis 1980: 260-61, 321.

καταπατήσει με, καὶ νὺξ φωτισμὸς ἐν τῇ τρυφῇ μου· ὅτι σκότος οὐ σκοτισθήσεταί ἀπὸ σοῦ, καὶ νὺξ ὡς ἡμέρα φωτισθήσεται· ὡς τὸ σκότος αὐτῆς, οὕτως καὶ τὸ φῶς αὐτῆς.[139]

Through these allusions to OT passages concerning God,[140] Palamas goes beyond marginalizing Jesus and making the Panagia the centre of the emperor's religion, for he is suggesting that, for the emperor, the Panagia is not merely *a* deity, but *the* deity, filling heaven and earth and being everywhere present like the God of the OT.

In the *Δωδεκάλογος* we saw a number of examples of (in Ricks's phrase) 'the language of Christianity turned against itself'. In the emperor's praise of the Panagia the language appropriated from Byzantine hymns is used against Christianity in a much more limited sense. The acclamations and the emperor's hymn are not part of a challenge to Christianity as a whole, but are used to present, through a distortion of the appropriated language, a picture of Christianity as the religion of a Virgin goddess in which Christ scarcely figures. The relation between this Christian goddess, who is also a patroness in war, and her obvious pagan counterpart, Athena, is discussed in the following section.

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[139] Psalm 138(139).8-12.

[140] Kasinis does not cite any OT passages in connection with the final seven lines of Canto X.

2.5 Christianity and paganism in the *Φλογέρα*

In this section I examine the Panagia's relationship to Aphrodite and Athena in the *Φλογέρα*, and the response of the Flute and other voices to the Christianization of the Parthenon, principally as these are articulated through appropriations of Biblical and liturgical language. I shall show that, while these appropriations serve a variety of purposes, the kind of syncretistic fusion of Christian and pagan figures characteristic of Sikelianos is not among them.[141]

We have seen how, through distortions of liturgical language, Palamas presents the Panagia as a divine figure largely divorced from her role in the Christian *economia*. This in itself might suggest that Palamas is inviting us to identify the Panagia with goddesses of the Greek pantheon, as many critics have assumed. Tsatsos, for example, writing in 1936, says that Basil goes στὸ ναὸ τῆς κοσμικῆς θεότητας, θὲς νὰ τὴν πῆς Ἀθηνᾶ, θὲς Παναγιά, θὲς Ἀφροδίτη.[142] And almost sixty years later Beaton writes of 'Basil's long prayer to the Virgin, who is also both Athena and Aphrodite'.[143] Although this response is long established, the cosmic deity with many names is difficult to locate within the text of the *Φλογέρα*, where it seems to matter very much who is called Panagia, who Aphrodite, who Athena.[144] There is no voice in the *Φλογέρα* (with the possible exception of the Rock of the Acropolis) which is in any doubt about the distinctions between them.

Aphrodite plays little part in the poem, and any idea of a connection

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[141] I have discussed the main points of this section elsewhere (Hirst 1998: 106-9).

[142] Tsatsos 1936: 193.

[143] Beaton 1994: 49.

[144] This is in marked contrast to Sikelianos' approach, as, for example, in «Ἱερὰ Ὁδός», where it is explicitly stated that 'the Great Goddess, the eternal Mother' is called Demeter in one place, Alcmena or Panagia in others (see p.143).

between her and the Panagia rests solely on the Rock's suggestion that the emperor approaching Athens is Ares drawn by his desire for Aphrodite (100:16-21). But the passage in which this occurs clearly shows the Rock to be thoroughly confused. The other references to Aphrodite in the poem certainly lend no support to her supposed identification with the Panagia.[145] Between Athena and the Panagia there is, however, at least a formal relationship. Its locus is the Parthenon, where the image of the Panagia has taken the place of the statue of Athena. Before considering this relationship as it is presented in the words of the Emperor, the Flute and other voices, it will be helpful to look at the Flute's response to the Byzantine transformation of the Parthenon.

In a long hymn in praise of the Parthenon at the end of Canto III the Flute already alluded to the damage it had suffered since classical times. At the beginning of Canto IX the Flute confronts the state of the Parthenon at the time of Basil II's pilgrimage (112:1-5):

> Καὶ πάντα ὁ δωρικὸς ναός, ἁπλὸς καὶ τρισμεγάλος.
>
> Καὶ ἁπλὸς καὶ τρισμεγάλος. Ναί. Μὰ μέσα στὴν ἁπλότη
> καὶ τὴ μεγαλοσύνη του κακοσημαδεμένος
> ἀπὸ τὸ μάτι τὸ τυφλὸ καὶ τὸ σκληρὸ τὸ χέρι
> τοῦ Ναζωραίου.

I referred earlier to the very limited presence of Christ in the *Φλογέρα*. This

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[145] In the utopia foreseen by the Apparition of the emperor's dream, the only deities that will remain are Athena and Aphrodite (141:15-18). Any connection with the Panagia is explicitly excluded, for among the gods that must vanish are Σωτῆρες καὶ Παντάνασσες (141:4). In Canto II Theophano (mother of Basil II) is called Aphrodite (42:12), but this Christian empress is presented as the very antithesis of the Panagia. Ruthlessly exploiting her sexual power, she is the archetypal 'Woman' who is 'both sin and salvation, life and Death' (47:15-18). This is a conception clearly incompatible with Christian ideas.

is the only instance in the poem where Christ is spoken of as, in any sense, the agent of acts which play a part at some level of the narrative. And the reference could hardly be more disparaging, or more at odds with Christian piety. To call Christ 'the Nazarene' already suggests he is being viewed from a non-Christian and non-familiar perspective. Swinburne's 'pale Galilean' is almost certainly in the background here.[146]

The Flute speaks of the Nazarene's 'blind eye and coarse hand' as having disfigured the Parthenon, making Christ responsible for the acts of Byzantine Christians who have added a dome as a 'derisory crown' and made the 'treasure store of purity' into a 'weird half-breed' (112:11-13),[147] and identifying his 'coarse hand' with the hand of the 'Byzantine craftsman' which has 'insolently touched . . . the flawless rhythms of the Athenian creator' (113:32-3).[148]

The extended passage (112:1—113:28) which begins with this reference to the Parthenon disfigured by the Nazarene is the most metrically disturbed in the entire poem. Its iambic lines vary in length from three to fifteen syllables, and are irregularly rhymed. There are only four other

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146 'Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath': from the 'Hymn to Proserpine', which is subtitled 'After the proclamation in Rome of the Christian Faith', and deals with a cultural change parallel to the Christianization of Athens (Swinburne 1940: 30). Palamas was very interested in Swinburne and refers to him many times in his prose works; on the occasion of Swinburne's death in 1909 he wrote a long appreciative essay (Palamas 1962-69: X, 368-85). Though Palamas does not refer to the 'Hymn to Proserpine' by name in this essay, he does mention the collection *Poems and Ballads* (Swinburne 1866) in which it was published, and his characterization of Swinburne's poetry in terms of 'pagan gods set against humble Virgins and suffering Christs, like cries of joy and purple lilies' (Palamas 1962-69: X, 377) is particularly appropriate to that poem, as it is to the anti-Christian elements in the *Φλογέρα*.

147 For a discussion of this passage see p.113.

148 The same perspective is evident in Canto V in the speech of Mount Parnassus, who says of the statues of the ancient gods that 'barbarians have smashed them and Galileans have cast them out' (77:11-12).

passages in the *Φλογέρα* where the regular fifteen-syllable unrhymed lines are interrupted.[149] One of these is the closely related passage which follows, describing the emperor's entourage worshipping in the disfigured temple; the other three are all distinct hymns or songs belonging to the voices of characters within the Flute's narrative, and consist of regular stanzaic structures.[150] These three passages, although they differ from the surrounding fifteen-syllable verse, create an effect, appropriate to song, of intensified order. This is not the case with the passage at the beginning of Canto IX about the disfiguring of the Parthenon. There, no recurring patterns emerge. The progressive disruption of the established metre, the arbitrary sequence of line lengths, seems to mirror the disruption of the 'faultless *rhythms* of the Athenian creator'; and the unpredictable rhymes add to the emotional intensity of the Flute's outrage.

The Flute's diatribe against Christ and the Byzantines is of crucial importance to the reinterpretation of the *Φλογέρα* as a work which, far from presenting a cultural synthesis, suggests an irresolvable contradiction between the modern Greeks' twin cultural heritages— a contradiction which Palamas seems to have internalized, if we take the Flute as an expression of one end of the spectrum of his views.[151] With the Flute's uncompromising condemnation of the Byzantine transformation of the Parthenon into a church of the Panagia in mind, we can turn back to the hymn to the Panagia

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[149] There are also brief passages where rhyme is added without metrical disturbance, as, for example, in descriptions of Theophano (41:14-20 and 42:1-9).

[150] *Φλογέρα* 57:1-28, 69:14-22, 75:30—76:3.

[151] In «Ὕμνος τῶν αἰώνων» (1896) Palamas presents a very different view of the architectural history of the Acropolis, seeing all the additions of the Byzantines, Franks, Turks etc. as contributing to the bridal attire of the Μητέρα and Πατρίδα (1962-69: V, 309). Palamas would not actually have seen the Acropolis encumbered with medieval and Ottoman buildings. Their removal was initiated in the 1840s and the last substantial medieval structure, the Frankish tower in the area of the Propylaea, was demolished in 1874 (Petrakos 1987: 29-35, 46).

which immediately precedes it at the end of Canto VIII.

Canto VIII contains two contrasted narratives. The first concerns Proclus, 'the last prophet of the pagans', a devotee of Athena; the second a simple monk devoted to the Panagia. Proclus arrives in Athens too late. Athena has already been driven from her temple, which is now occupied by the Panagia. The goddess takes refuge overnight in the house of Proclus and departs at dawn never to be seen again (101:5—104:4). In the course of this tale the Storks of the Acropolis and Athena herself speak in very disparaging terms of the Panagia. The second, much longer narrative concerns an icon painter, a devotee of the Panagia, a simple monk who never learns any of the monastic services beyond the two words of the angelic greeting, Χαῖρε, Χαριτωμένη. The monk spends his life painting icons of the Virgin; he dies and is buried, and from his mouth, with its roots in his heart, grows a white lily with the angelic greeting inscribed on its petals in words of gold; and within his heart is found a painted image of the Virgin (104:7—110:34). The Flute retells this tale in a manner which is faithful both to the language and the spirit of its hagiographic source, the *Ἁμαρτωλῶν Σωτηρία* (published 1641).[152] There is no doubt that the kind of simple piety and devotion exemplified by the icon painter appealed to one side of Palamas' personality.[153] Like the other icon painter in «Ὁ ζωγράφος Λάζαρος» (1915) the monk of the *Φλογέρα* may have been for Palamas an ἥρωα[ς] βυζαντιν[ὸς] [. . .] τῆς πίστης.[154] But the Flute, representing the opposite

[152] Palamas combines elements from two separate «Θαύματα», Nos. 29 and 46 (see Kasinis 1980: 311-19). In the synaxarial source, as in Luke, the angelic greeting is Χαῖρε, Κεχαριτωμένη. Dropping the reduplication is not merely modernizing, since it makes the phrase conform to the pattern of the second hemistich of the πολιτικὸς στίχος, in which position Palamas uses it repeatedly.

[153] See, for example, No.34 in *Ὁ Κύκλος τῶν Τετράστιχων* (Palamas 1962-69: 257), and «Ὀνειρεμένη προσευχή» (p.122 n.189 below).

[154] Palamas 1962-69: VII, 40-42.

pole of Palamas' thought, is capable, as we have seen, of expressing contempt for the Christian world, and, as we shall see, of subverting directly and indirectly the story of the monk. Having faithfully related that story, the Flute, in the final paragraph of Canto VIII, utters, once more in its own voice,[155] a hymn to the Panagia which begins as follows (110:35—111:1):

> Μητέρα τῶν ἀνέλπιδων κι ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου σκέπη,
> κάτου ἀπὸ σὲ κ' οἱ ἀνέλπιδοι κι ὅλος ὁ κόσμος ἴσοι !

The reader has to decide whether this hymn represents the perspective of the story of Proclus and Athena or of that of the monk (it contains echoes of both), or, conceivably, some compromise between them. I read it as a bitterly ironic hymn, hostile to the Panagia and entirely consistent with the Flute's contempt for the Christianization of the Parthenon. A degree of ambiguity must, however, be admitted, and Stephanides and Katsimbalis in their translation do their best to make it a Christian hymn:

> O Mother of the hopeless, their safeguard,
> To seek your aid the anguished world is one.[156]

Let us consider the first two lines in relation to their sources. First this, from the Εὐχὴ εἰς τὴν Ὑπεραγίαν Θεοτόκον in the Service of the Akathistos Hymn:

> ἡ τῶν ἀπηλπισμένων μόνη ἐλπίς, [...] καὶ πάντων τῶν Χριστιανῶν τὸ καταφύγιον.

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[155] This hymn cannot be construed as a part of the story of the monk. It forms a separate verse paragraph, is framed by no narrative statement, and has no counterpart in the hagiographic source. Besides, it uses the monk's story as a source of metaphors for the world dominated by the Panagia.

[156] Stephanides & Katsimbalis 1982: 243. See also p.106 nn.160-61.

Kasinis quotes more extensively from the prayer to include the phrase τοῦ φιλανθρώπου Θεοῦ Μήτηρ (vocative).[157] Xydis cites an alternative, though closely related, source in a brief invocation of the Panagia appended to the Prayer to Christ which follows the Prayer to the Theotokos:[158]

> Τὴν πᾶσαν ἐλπίδα μου εἰς σὲ ἀνατίθημι. Μήτηρ τοῦ Θεοῦ, φύλαξόν με ὑπὸ τὴν σκέπην σου.

It seems clear that Palamas was aware of both. From Μήτηρ τοῦ Θεοῦ (or its variant in the first source) and ἡ τῶν ἀπηλπισμένων μόνη ἐλπίς he fashions Μητέρα τῶν ἀνέλπιδων. The substitution of Μητέρα for ἐλπὶς, or alternatively of ἀνέλπιδων(=ἀπηλπισμένων) for τοῦ Θεοῦ, may be more than a reshuffling of words to fit the metre. If one reads Palamas' phrase as 'Mother *to* the despairing', the change is innocuous; but 'Mother *of* the despairing' could imply that the Panagia has brought into being the people without hope who populate the world she dominates, that she is, in other words, the source not of hope (as in the liturgical sources) but of despair. This reading, slight though its support may be in the first line itself, is borne out by what follows. It is evident that a Nietzschean conception of Christianity underlies this passage; and Nietzsche too associated Christianity with despair.[159]

In the second half of the first line we can see Palamas as substituting ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου for πάντων τῶν Χριστιανῶν of the first source, and replacing καταφύγιον by σκέπη from the second. The first substitution is significant since the Flute's hymn describes a world in which everyone is a devotee of the Panagia. The difficult second line may imply that despair is

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[157] Kasinis 1980: 294-5. Kasinis gives as the context the Greater and Lesser *Apodeipna*, where the same prayer is found.

[158] Xydis 1978: 190.

[159] Nietzsche 1997: 64. See also p.107 n.162.

characteristic of this 'whole world'. It begins κάτου ἀπὸ σέ (following σκέπη), adapting ὑπὸ τὴν σκέπην σου from the second source. What the line says literally is, 'under you both the despairing and the whole world [are] equal', or, perhaps, 'are the same', or in Stephanides and Katsimbalis' idiom 'are one'.[160] Unless this line is simply praising the Virgin for not discriminating against the despairing (which seems unlikely since she is their 'Mother'), then it suggests that in subjection to her the whole world is without hope. This would, of course, be absurd from a Christian perspective, but no such perspective is evident in the lines that follow (111:2-14):

> Τέτοιος ὁ κόσμος ἔγινε μ' ἐσέ· τὰ πλούτια του ὅλα,
> θησαυροὺς δύναμης, χαρᾶς, καὶ τέχνης καὶ σοφίας,
> ὅλα τ' ἀρνήθηκε γιὰ σέ, καὶ γίνηκε γιὰ σένα
> κόσμος φτωχὸς ἀπὸ τὸ νοῦ, γυμνὸς ἀπὸ τὴ γνώση,
> κι ἀστόχαστος καὶ βάρβαρος· καὶ παραπεταμένος
> στὰ πόδια σου καλόγερος, ἀσκητευτὴς μπροστά σου,
> μαράζωμα ὅλη του ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ὁ νοῦς του μοναστήρι.
> Μπρὸς στὴν εἰκόνα σου γυρτὸς ὁ κόσμος, μὲ τὸ στόμα
> τρεμουλιαστό, κρεμάμενο μόνο ἀπὸ τ' ὄνομά σου
> κι ἀπὸ τὴ σκέπη σου, Κυρά, κι ἀπὸ τ' ἀνάβλεμμά σου,
> μ' ἕνα τροπάρι μυστικό, μὲ μιὰ πνιχτὴ μουρμούρα,
> δυὸ ἀπέραντα κοντόλογα: Χαῖρε, Χαριτωμένη !
> Τὸν πρῶτο κόσμο πίνιξες Ἐσύ, τὸν πλούσιο κόσμο [. . .].[161]

The general impression given by the Flute's hymn is that the 'rich world' which the Panagia has stifled was superior to the 'poor'. Christian world whose 'whole life' is a μαράζωμα (literally 'a withering',

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160 Stephanides and Katsimbalis fudge the issue by making οἱ ἀνέλπιδοι purely adjectival and ignoring ὅλος and κάτου ἀπὸ σέ (see p.104 above).

161 Again Stephanides and Katsimbalis make the best of this, (from a Christian perspective): ἀρνήθηκε is 'renounced' rather than 'denied'; φτωχὸς and γυμνὸς become 'simple' and 'devoid'; παραπεταμένος and κρεμάμενο the more diginifed 'kneeling' and 'dependent'; μαράζωμα 'a penance'; and δυὸ ἀπέραντα κοντόλογα 'words divine' (1982: 243-4).

figuratively a state of misery or grief).[162] This is consistent with the Flute's veneration of the Parthenon, the supreme symbol of that 'rich world' and its entirely unambiguous condemnation of Byzantine Christians for the damage they have done to it. Furthermore, a similarly negative view of the Panagia's effect on the ancient world is expressed by the Storks of the Acopolis (102:9-12). Of particular significance in the hymn is the Flute's use of the adjective βάρβαρος to describe the Christian world. Even in its original meaning of 'non-Greek', its onomatopoeic representation of incomprehensible (foreign) speech is already value-laden. With its later accretions of meaning such as 'uncivilized' and 'lawless' and 'violent', it is surely the one word in the Flute's hymn which cannot be accommodated to a Christian, and particularly a Greek Orthodox, interpretation. The Emperor Basil II has already been characterized by the Flute (or the Poet) in Canto III as ὁ νικητὴς κι ὁ βάρβαρος (52:31, repeated 53:34) in the context of his decision to make his pilgimage to Athens rather than to any of the great Christian cities. Stephanides and Katsimbalis annotate their translation at that point, explaining that 'Palamas uses the epithet "Barbarian" to stress the fact that Basil II was not of Athenian descent, nor was he born within the frontiers of Classical Greece.'[163] Such technical niceties seem irrelevant in view of Canto IX where the Flute calls the Byzantines 'foreign' and groups them with other enemies of 'the Race', and of its 'heart', the Parthenon.[164]

[162] The Flute reflects Nietzsche's view of Christianity as mankind's greatest misfortune (1980: 181), a slave morality taking destructive revenge against all that is noble (1994: 20-24), opposed to wisdom and knowledge (1990: 175-8, 181), and rendering vain all the achievements of the ancient world (1990: 192-5).

[163] Stephanides & Katsimbalis 1982: 115 n.1

[164] In addition to implying, in the reference to the 'foreign seed' and 'weird half-breed' (see p.101 above and p.113 below), that the Byzantines are not part of the Greek race, when he lists the successive abuses to which the Parthenon will be subjected (113:7-10) Palamas rhymes βυζαντινός with ἀγαρηνός, underlining the implication (potentially

Besides, the Flute calls Constantine the Great ἕνας ρήγας βάρβαρος, not because of his origins, but because of his actions in placing an image of his own head on a headless statue of Apollo (112:14-18). For the Flute βάρβαρος is a term of utmost contempt, and it is directed at the Christian world of Byzantium.

If my ironic reading of the Flute's hymn to the Panagia is correct, then the first two lines addressing her as Μητέρα τῶν ἀνέλπιδων involve a highly subversive appropriation of the words of the liturgical source texts, inverting their meaning and making the Virgin not a refuge and source of hope, but the cause and origin of despair; and also, in what follows, the agent who has destroyed all that was of value in the world— a fitting counterpart to Christ 'the Nazarene' whose 'blind eye and coarse hand' has disfigured the Parthenon. The prayers from the Akathistos Service are not the only liturgical texts subverted in the Flute's ironic hymn. The concept of the Panagia as conqueror of the ancient world is Christian in origin, and Christian expressions of this idea, paraphrased in the eighth of the emperor's acclamations, underlie this hymn.

The enmity between the Panagia and Athena is articulated by the emperor, from the Christian perspective, in the first acclamation (115:30-32):

> Μαρία Κυρὰ 'Αθηνιώτισσα, πιὸ γαληνή, πιὸ ὡραία
> στὸν πιὸ ὡραῖο, πιὸ γαληνὸ μέσα στοὺς θρόνους θρόνο,
> νικήτρα 'Εσὺ τῆς 'Αθηνᾶς καὶ σκέπη τῆς 'Αθήνας !

This is more remote from Byzantine hymnography than the other acclamations, though it does have, like the second acclamation, obvious (if verbally less close) affinities with the *kontakion* Τῇ Ὑπερμάχῳ

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offensive to Greek readers) that the Byzantines are no better than the Turks, or any other people who have damaged the Parthenon.

Στρατηγῷ. Here, however, the Panagia's role as protectress of the city has been explicitly transferred from Constantinople to Athens. As source Kasinis indicates only a text which connects the idea of beauty with the Panagia.[165] Others could easily be found for θρόνος and σκέπη,[166] but none to account for the whole complex of ideas in these lines. Liturgical texts speak of the Panagia more often *as* a throne (incarnational imagery) than *on* a throne,[167] though in icons she is often depicted enthroned in heaven. Palamas' 'throne among thrones' is not a heavenly throne, but the Parthenon itself, the throne of Athena which the Panagia has won by conquest.[168]

The emperor may acknowledge the beauty of the temple his Patroness has acquired, but in the eighth acclamation he praises her for confounding the thought-world of the ancient Greeks which produced that temple (122:28-30):

> Τοὺς φιλοσόφους ἄσοφους δείχνεις, καὶ μωρολόγους
> τῶν ὄμορφων παραμυθιῶν τοὺς ραψῳδούς, ὦ Κόρη.
> κ' ἔπλεξες τὸ στεφάνι 'Εσὺ ποὺ εἶν' ἄπλεχτο ἀπὸ χέρια.

The liturgical source of the first two lines, the seventeenth *oikos* of the Akathistos Hymn, is more comprehensive in its condemnation of the ancient culture:

> Χαῖρε, φιλοσόφους ἀσόφους δεικνύουσα· χαῖρε, τεχνολόγους
> ἀλόγους ἐλέγχουσα.
> Χαῖρε, ὅτι ἐμωράνθησαν οἱ δεινοὶ συζητηταί· χαῖρε, ὅτι
> ἐμαράνθησαν οἱ τῶν μύθων ποιηταί.

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[165] Kasinis 1980: 272-4. The validity of Kasinis' source identification in this case relies mainly on the presence in both texts of the words Μαρία, Κυρία.

[166] See p.105.

[167] The Akathistos Canon, for example, addresses the Virgin as πύργε θρόνε τοῦ Παντοκράτορας (Ode 1, *troparion* 2).

[168] See the internal sources for the first acclamation: 55:2-5, 103:31-2.

Χαῖρε, τῶν 'Αθηναίων τὰς πλοκὰς διασπῶσα.

The last line here, which Kasinis, understandably, does not cite,[169] with its πλοκάς ('complexities') 'of the Athenians', may have led Palamas to Ode 4, *troparion* 5 of the Akathistos Canon, with its cognate verb and adjective, on which the third line of the acclamation is based:

Σὲ τὴν πλέξασαν τῷ κόσμῳ ἀχειρόπλοκον στέφανον ἀνυμνολογοῦμεν· Χαῖρε σοι, Παρθένε, κραυγάζοντας [. . .].

Again, Kasinis' citation stops short, ending with ἀνυμνολογοῦμεν, so that he misses the Παρθένε which may have prompted Palamas to insert the comparable title Κόρη in the acclamation.[170]

Palamas' adaptation of the liturgical sources for the emperor is broadly in the spirit of the originals, including, in this case, the retention of the incarnational structure of the image of the crown, or wreath, not woven by human hand. By an ingenious compression Palamas fashions μωρολόγους from ἀλόγους and ἐμωράνθησαν, referring to the τεχνολόγοι and συζητηταί respectively, and applies it to the third group, the 'makers [or poets] of the myths'.[171] The change from τῶν μύθων to τῶν ὄμορφων παραμυθιῶν suggests ambivalence, reducing 'myths' to 'fairy tales' but adding a positive evaluator; while the substitution of the

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[169] Kasinis 1980: 278.

[170] Even though Κόρη is a title used in liturgical texts for the Panagia (and also for the myrophores) it belonged first to Persephone (as daughter of Demeter) and to Athena (as daugher of Zeus). An important aspect of the dialogue between Paganism and Christianity in the *Φλογέρα* is the struggle for the possession of words: Ἀθηναία, Κόρη, Παρθένος, Σοφία, Ἀγάπη, Λόγος.

[171] Similarly, the noun μαράζωμα in the Flute's hymn (see p.106), characterizing 'the whole life' of the Christian world, may be an ironic echo of the verb ἐμαράνθησαν, which, in the Akathistos Hymn, indicates the Panagia's destructive effect on the ancient culture.

ancient ραψῳδοί for ποιηταί suggests that Palamas stopped short of having the emperor condemn 'poets'.

The Flute's hymn to the Panagia also addresses this *oikos* of the Akathistos Hymn and related texts. In a passage quoted above the Flute describes the 'riches' of the ancient world which have been 'denied' for the Panagia's sake as

> θησαυροὺς δύναμης, χαρᾶς, καὶ τέχνης καὶ σοφίας.

The last two terms could be related to the τεχνολόγοι and φιλόσοφοι of the Akathistos Hymn, but the whole line is more pertinently related to the preceding sentence in the Hymn:

> Χαῖρε, σοφίας Θεοῦ δοχεῖον· χαῖρε, προνοίας αὐτοῦ ταμεῖον.[172]

These are not the only phrases from the Akathistos Hymn which may be related to Palamas' line about 'treasure stores'. Others include θησαυρὲ τῆς ζωῆς ἁδαπάντε (*oikos* 23) and κρατὴρ κιρνῶν ἀγαλλίασιν (*oikos* 21); and from the Akathistos Canon: χαρᾶς δοχεῖον (Ode 1, *troparion* 1).

Thus Palamas draws on the same liturgical sources for the emperor's acclamation of the Virgin and the Flute's ironic hymn to her. The emperor and the Flute are in agreement as to the facts: the Panagia has displaced Athena and destroyed the culture of the ancient Greeks. For this the Christian emperor praises her, while for the Flute (and also the Rock, the Storks and Athena herself) it is reason for condemnation. But neither the emperor nor the Flute identifies the Panagia and Athena, or even allows any

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172 Also in Palamas' sights here is his own phrase θησαυρὸ σοφίας (109:3), used to describe what the illiterate icon painter found in the two words of the angelic greeting (substituted for the θησαυρὸν πολυτίμητον of the source: see Kasinis 1980: 318).

equality between them. The notion of the cosmic deity, at once Christian and pagan, ensconced in the Parthenon as a symbol of cultural synthesis and continuity is simply not substantiated by the text of the *Φλογέρα*.

Nevertheless, the *Φλογέρα* does promote, mainly through the voice of the Flute, a particular and limited idea of cultural continuity which is both highly subversive of, and derogatory to, Christianity. We have already seen a hint of this in the Flute's application to the Parthenon of imagery which in its liturgical context denotes the Panagia. In the same ironic hymn, having accused the Panagia of stifling the 'first [i.e. the classical] world' (in the last of the lines quoted above), the Flute appropriates and subverts a part of the legend of the icon painter as follows (111:15-17)

> καὶ ἀπ' τὸν πνιμένο φύτρωσε χρυσόγραφτος ὁ κρίνος,
> καὶ στ' ἄσπρα καὶ στ' ἀμάραντα φύλλα του χαρασμένα
> τὰ λόγια τὰ δοξαστικά:— Χαῖρε, Χαριτωμένη [173]

Palamas uses the saint's corpse as a metaphor for the world destroyed by the Panagia: from the remains of the ancient world springs what is most beautiful and enduring (ἀμάραντα φύλλα) in the new, Christian world. The subversion is compounded by the addition of the word ἀμάραντα, which is not found in the immediate source, but alludes to the ῥόδον/ἄνθος τὸ ἀμάραντον of the Akathistos Canon[174] or the βλαστός ἀμάραντος of the Akathistos Hymn (*oikos* 5), all metaphors for Christ growing from the Virgin. The revenge of the ancient world, implicit in this appropriation of the miraculous lily, is explicit in the taunt which, in Canto VII, the Flute put into the mouths of the ancient gods. Though driven from their temples, they still haunt the world, taking 'other forms and other names' and 'seek from the

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173 Compare the synaxarial source: Ἐφύτρωσεν εἰς τὸν τάφον του ἕνας ὡραιότατος κρίνος· καὶ εἰς κάθε φύλλον ἦτον γεγραμμένα ταῦτα μὲ χρυσᾶ γράμματα. Χαῖρε Κεχαριτωμένη Μαρία (quoted in Kasinis 1980: 318).

174 See pp.90-92.

same believers the same worship'. 'Although you are Christians', the gods declare, 'you are pagans still' (94:7-16). And later the Flute is to suggest that the mosaic image of the Panagia in the Parthenon, unadorned, without a crown, with the multiple folds of her drapery, appears 'as though fashioned, a last Olympian reminder, by an Attic craftsman' (114:21-7).

Only in this very limited sense— the subversion of Christian worship by the ancient Gods— is there any interpenetration of the two worlds represented by Athena and the Panagia, and it is yet another aspect of the enmity between them.

It is not only in the hymn at the end of Canto VIII that the Flute describes the Parthenon in language belonging to the Panagia. A metaphor for the Virgin similar to those discussed above, ἁγνείας θησαύρισμα, from the Akathistos Canon, (Ode 1, *troparion* 4) is appropriated in the Flute's description of the Parthenon as τοῦ καθάριου ὁ θησαυρός at the beginning of Canto IX. The passage in question is remarkable for the way in which it subverts the language and imagery of the Incarnation (112:6-13)

> Σ' ἔφτασε καὶ σὲ λάβωσε, χιονάτο περιστέρι,
> τοῦ κυνηγοῦ ἡ σαΐττα!
> Στῆς ὀμορφιᾶς τὸν οὐρανὸ σὰ νὰ μὴν εἶχες γέρμα,
> τῆς μαστοριᾶς ἀστέρι ἐσύ.
> Κ' ἔγυρες καὶ μολεύτηκες σὰν ἀπὸ ξένο σπέρμα,
> καὶ τοῦ καθάριου ὁ θησαυρός, παράξενος γασμούλος·
> καὶ τοῦ σεμνοῦ πολύθεου μετώπου σου ἕνας τρούλλος
> κορώνα ἀναγελαστική !

As a 'snow-white dove', the Parthenon is the counterpart of the Panagia, τὴν μόνην ἀκήρατον καὶ καλὴν περιστεράν.[175] The Parthenon is also 'a star' which was 'as though it had no setting'. In the Akathistos Canon the 'unsetting star' is a metaphor for the Virgin (Ode 9, *troparion* 2):

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175 From the *stichera* for Orthros on days when the Akathistos Hymn is sung.

Χαῖρε, ἄστρον ἄδυτον, εἰσάγον κόσμῳ τὸν μέγαν Ἥλιον,

while in the Akathistos Hymn it denotes Christ (*oikos* 9):

Χαῖρε, ἀστέρος ἀδύτου Μήτηρ.

But the 'star' of the Parthenon has set, the 'hunter's arrow' has struck 'the dove' and the 'treasure store of purity' has 'been polluted'. So far the only named agent for these acts is the 'coarse hand of the Nazarene' in the lines immediately preceding. This heightens the irony of these appropriations of liturgical images for Christ and the Virgin.

The violation of the Parthenon is described in specifically sexual terms: it has been 'polluted as by a foreign seed' to produce the 'weird half-breed' (a metaphor for the combination of classical frieze and Byzantine dome). This sexual imagery is closely related to the way in which the asexual nature of Christ's conception is repeatedly described in liturgical texts. Ἀμόλυντος (a negative cognate of Palamas' verb μολεύτηκες) is one of the many adjectives regularly used to indicate the Panagia's unsullied, unspotted, etc. nature. The Akathistos Canon addresses the Panagia in the architectural metaphor of the bridal chamber as παστὰς τοῦ Λόγου ἀμόλυντε (Ode 6, *troparion* 1). The conception of Christ takes place 'without seed' (ἄνευ σπορᾶς),[176] and in the Akathistos Canon this idea is expressed through the same architectural metaphor: Χαῖρε, παστὰς ἀσπόρου νυμφεύσεως (*oikos* 19). Also in the Hymn, the Virgin asks Gabriel ἀσπόρου γὰρ συλλήψεως τὴν κύησιν πῶς λέγεις (*oikos* 2); and the Canon, addressing Christ, calls her τὴν ἐπὶ γῆς ἀσπόρως σὲ κυοφορήσασαν (Ode 9, *troparion* 5).

In the context of the appropriation to the Parthenon of the liturgical

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176 *Exaposteilaria* for Vespers of the Annunciation (25 March).

images of the 'dove', 'star' and 'treasure store', the statement μολεύτηκες ἀπὸ ξένο σπέρμα clearly invokes and reverses the idea of Christ being conceived without seed and without stain. The whole complex of appropriations creates a powerful irony, since the sexual and racial pollution of the Parthenon is caused by its conversion to a church dedicated to the ἄσπιλος, ἀμόλυντος, ἄφθορος, ἄχραντος, ἁγνὴ Παρθένος, as she is called in the Prayer to the Theotokos (from the Akathistos Service) referred to above; and, what is more, this pollution is attributed to the 'hand of the Nazarene'. For the Flute the presence of the Christian Παρθένος in the pagan Παρθενών is a violation of the grossest kind, in effect a rape.

In appropriating the language of Christian asexuality, however, Palamas has changed its register. The Christian ethical concept of sexual purity, closely linked to the doctrine of original sin, is of no interest to the Flute, whose concern is solely with the violation of the aesthetic purity of the Parthenon as a work of art, the highest achievement of the ancient Greeks. While on the aesthetic level Byzantium and the ancient Greek world are at opposite poles, there is some assimilation of Byzantine figures (but mortals, and not the Panagia or Christ) to pagan mythology. In calling Theophano κενταύρισσα βασίλισσα, and describing her son as τὸν κένταυρο τὸ ρήγα, 'whose bow is Eros and whose spear is Ares' (47:2-3, 9), the Flute is assimilating both of them to ancient Greek mythology. Earlier passages in which Theophano is addressed as Fury, Sphinx and Aphrodite (41:11, 42:12) are part of the same tendency, observable at many points in the *Φλογέρα*, which Agapitos discusses in terms of a radical transformation of the Byzantine perspective to conform to what he calls 'the poet's Helladic ideology'.[177] But the assimilation of Byzantium to classical Greece (a nationalist perspective) is not the only, or even the dominant, trend in the historical perspective of the *Φλογέρα*. The contrary trend, represented

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[177] Agapitos 1994: 1-11, 6.

primarily but not exclusively by the Flute (and expressing Palamas' aesthetic perspective), is to assert an unresolvable antagonism between Byzantine (i.e. Christian) and classical values. Though the famous or infamous figures of Byzantine history, such as Basil II and Theophano, are likened, with approval (even by the Flute), to pagan deities, the Byzantines in general, together with Christ and the Virgin, are condemned by the Flute and other voices which assert the primacy of the ancient, pre-Christian world.

2.6 Christ and faith in «Θωμᾶς»

In «Θυγατέρες τῆς Σιών» (1889) the poet spoke of the 'words of Faith and love' which the female followers of Jesus spoke to his 'faithless' (or 'unbelieving') heart (τῆς ἄπιστης καρδιᾶς). But the poet's unbelief was not in contention with their 'Faith', nor was it disturbed by it, since the faith of which they seemed to speak to him was faith in humanity, not divinity. Their faith and his unbelief appeared to be the same thing, although the argument of the poem was conducted in terms of love rather than faith: the women loved Jesus first and foremost as a man, and the poet loved them for their humanity rather than their sanctity.[178] Some thirty-five years later, in «Θωμᾶς» (1925),[179] Palamas presents 'unbelief' in a rather different light.

«Θωμᾶς» is a late poem in a long poetic career, and represents Palamas' last and perhaps most celebrated extended engagement with Christian language. It has usually been understood as expressing the anguish of the unbeliever who longs to believe in Christ;[180] and a superficial reading of the poem tends to bear this out: it is addressed principally to Jesus,[181] and the speaker appears to be identified with the apostle Thomas. It seems unlikely, however, that Palamas was seriously troubled at any time in his life by his lack of belief in the dogmas of Christianity, most significantly here the Resurrection and the divinity of Christ. A careful reading suggests that the issue in «Θωμᾶς» is not belief in the Christian sense, and that the Christian material in the poem is used chiefly as metaphor. What concerns the poet is uncertainty about the existence of a transcendent reality whose

[178] See pp.44-53.

[179] Palamas 1962-69: IX, 242-6. First published in 1925 in *Ἐλεύθερος Λόγος* on the Sunday of Thomas (26 April), as «Τὸ Βαγγέλιο τοῦ Θωμᾶ», the title referring, presumably, to the Εὐαγγέλιον (John 20.19-25) appointed for the Liturgy on that day.

[180] As in Moschos 1993: 232.

[181] There are brief apostrophes in stanzas 25 and 26 to the 'divine vision within me' and to Golgotha, as well as passages where no addressee is evident.

essence is beauty; about the truth, in other words, of his own poetic vision.

Since «Θωμᾶς» is addressed to Jesus, we cannot speak of the marginalization of Christ, as in earlier poems. Nor is there any significant displacement onto the feminine. Though the erotic element is not strong, the aestheticization of Christ is central. There are elements of theological and ethical contentiousness in relation to Christian teaching, and the poem also contains strong hints of syncretism. «Θωμᾶς» is rich in Biblical allusions, and here the language of Christianity is not used against itself so much as diverted to serve different ends. The appropriations are subtle, but their effect is to foreground the poetic ego even, or especially, in its self-doubt.

After an initial allusion to the story of Doubting Thomas (stanzas 1-2) the speaker describes his state of mind in more general terms(3-6). He then uses Peter and Judas, as well as Thomas, as yardsticks for his anguish (7-9), followed by a number of other Biblical figures (10-14). Palamas' utopian vision, familiar from the *Δωδεκάλογος* and the *Φλογέρα*, is outlined once more,[182] but is said to lack its 'highest beauty: God' (15-19). The internal conflict between rational thought and his 'divine vision' leads the speaker to appropriate the crown of thorns (26) even as he aspires to worship the beauty of Christ (26-28).

The subject of ἀπιστία is not declared at the beginning of the poem, but is implicit in the name of the apostle Thomas in the title, and in the allusions to John in stanzas 1-2a:

Ἄ ! τὰ σημάδια ποὺ Σοῦ ἀφήσαν
τὰ καρφιὰ
στὴν ἄχραντή σου μὲ γυρίσαν
ὁμορφιά.

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[182] See pp.71-3, 100 n.145. Again there are affinities with the 'new heaven' and the 'new earth' of the Apocalypse. As well as the ἄλλοι οὐρανοί of stanza 15 there is an οἰκουμένη νέα, fathered by Ares (ὁ πόλεμος) in stanza 18.

'Ο Κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου!
Φῶς ! Πονῶ.

Thomas was not present when Jesus appeared to the disciples on the evening of the day of the Resurrection. When 'the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord"', he could not believe it and his assertion of disbelief is the source for the first stanza of the poem:

> ἐὰν μὴ ἴδω ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτοῦ τὸν τύπον τῶν ἥλων [. . .]
> οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω.[183]

Palamas has modernized the vocabulary for the 'print of the nails', and altered the syntactical and narrative context. The 'marks of the nails' are now the subject, not the object like τὸν τύπον, and are associated with the moment of revelation (when, in John, Jesus only says 'see my hands') rather than the moment of disbelief (eight days earlier according to John), since the reference to the marks leads immediately to Thomas' cry of faith, which Palamas takes over verbatim.[184] In one sense, though, there is no narrative context, since the entire poem is a single unframed utterance, and the speaker is clearly a modern persona and not the apostle Thomas.

The third line begins στὴν ἄχραντή σου, as though it were going to give the location of the marks of the nails, as in the source; but the intervention of μὲ γυρίσαν before ὀμορφιά resolves the ambiguity to exclude this. Nevertheless, the impression remains that στὴν ἄχραντή

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[183] John 20.19-29, 25.

[184] John 20.28. It may be that this verbatim quotation partly determined the unusual metre of the poem, where iambic lines of nine syllables with final stress on the penultimate syllable (modelled on 'Ο Κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου) alternate with three-syllable lines with stress on the last syllable. It is also true, as Tsatsos says (1936: 28), that the 'rhythmically broken line' of the poem is, in itself, expressive of 'anguished supplication'.

σου ὁμορφιά has replaced ἐν ταῖς χερσίν αὐτοῦ, an impression reinforced by the liturgical adjective ἄχραντος, since one of its most familiar contexts is the eucharistic prayer in the Liturgy of John Chrysostom, which says that Christ 'took bread' ἐν ταῖς ἁγίαις καὶ ἀχράντοις [...] χερσίν. In another sense Christ's 'beauty', to which the marks of the nails bring the speaker back, has been substituted for the Resurrection, of whose truth Thomas was convinced by seeing the marks of the nails. Thus Palamas, starting from the wounds of the Crucifixion, immediately diverts attention away from the earthly, suffering and resurrected Christ to an aestheticized divinity, an embodiment of ideal beauty.

The subject of the poem is, nonetheless, suffering, but the mental anguish of the speaker, rather than the sufferings of Christ. In the first five lines the speaker seems to identify with Thomas in his moment of belief, but in the sixth line, Φῶς! Πονῶ, an 'I' emerges which is distinct from Thomas (whose suffering must have ceased the moment he saw the risen Christ). Πονῶ, 'I suffer', following so closely the allusion to Christ's wounds, is a first hint of the appropriation of Christ's sufferings which runs through the poem and is made explicit in the desire for the 'crown of thorns' in stanza 26.

The exclamatory Φῶς! is clearly attributive, adding a third term to Κύριος and Θεός in the quotation from John. To the material drawn from John, the poet has now added two attributes of Christ: 'Light' and his 'unblemished beauty'. Light is an attribute, or name, of Christ central to Christian tradition and originating in John. While the beauty of Christ has, as noted earlier, some liturgical, though no Biblical, support, beauty is certainly not central to the Christian image of Christ.[185] Light and beauty are, on the other hand, both key attributes of Apollo; and it should be remembered that in «Χαιρετισμὸς ἀναστάσιμος» Palamas had applied Apollo's title

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[185] See p.48 n.32.

Χρυσοκόμης to Christ.[186] Now, in «Θωμᾶς», he exploits the tension between the Apollonian conception of Christ as the embodiment of beauty and the crucified Christ of the Gospels. The two words, Φῶς! Πονῶ (repeated, without the exclamation mark, in stanza 23) present in its most condensed form the dichotomy between what the speaker aspires to, the (Apollonian) 'divine vision' of stanza 25, and his actual state of mind (a Crucifixion). The poem reiterates this dichotomy through a series of pairs of contrasted terms, ideas, or personae.

In stanzas 2b-4 the speaker longs to be a worshipper of the 'light' and 'beauty' of Christ, but is prevented by the state of his heart and mind:

> Στὰ τετραπέρατα τοῦ κόσμου
> νὰ γενῶ
>
> προσκυνητὴς καὶ δοξαστής Σου
> μιὰ φορὰ
> δός, γιὰ τ' Ἁγίου Σου παραδείσου
> τὴ χαρά.
>
> Μὰ τὴν καρδιὰ καημός, σαράκι
> τρώει τὸ νοῦ,
> στὴ γλύκα, ποιός μοῦ στάει φαρμάκι,
> τ' οὐρανοῦ;

If this were truly in the style of a Christian supplication, one would expect some reference to grace or mercy where the poet speaks of paradise. Nevertheless, the phrase, 'for the joy of Your Holy paradise', in the context of this plea to become a worshipper, evokes the saying of Jesus that 'there will be more joy in heaven (χαρὰ [. . .] ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ) over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons'.[187] Παράδεισος is a

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[186] See pp.53-4.

[187] Luke 15.7. There is a much more obvious appropriation of this saying in quatrain 122 of *Ὁ κύκλος τῶν τετράστιχων* (1929), where Palamas writes (1962-69: IX, 275) of

rare word in the NT, occurring only once in the Gospels, and it may be that we should also see in this plea an allusion to Jesus' words to one of the thieves crucified with him: 'Today you will be with me in Paradise'.[188] Through this veiled allusion the Crucifixion remains distantly present, but only as a metaphor for the sufferings of the speaker.

In stanzas 5-6 the poet acknowledges that he 'cannot bend wholeheartedly before [Christ] and yet how [he] would like to lead the dance (νὰ σύρω / τὸ χορό) which the great, pure longing for [Christ] of the saints and martyrs initiates on the stage (σκηνή) of the continents'. This is a strange metaphor for the worldwide diffusion of Christianity. The words χορός and σκηνή are closely associated with ancient Greek drama, which was presented as part of religious festivals, particularly those in honour of Dionysus. Their use here suggests that Palamas is evading the historical basis of Christianity, in favour of a more general and syncretistic conception of religion and divinity, in keeping with his repeated insistence on 'light' and 'beauty' in relation to Christ or God. The poet not only subsumes Christian religion in Greek drama, but also seeks a leading role in that drama.[189] This suggests that Μπροστά σου σύψυχος νὰ γείρω / δὲ μπορῶ constitutes a refusal, rather than an admission of inability, to bend before Christ; and thus that the poetic ego is in contention with Christ.

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the heaven of the poet, where it is not a question of joy *over* a sinner, but of the joy *of* sinners, which is greater even than that of the righteous.

[188] Luke 23.42-3. Πονῶ, in its syntactic isolation, suggests another of the 'Seven Words from the Cross': διψῶ (John 19.28).

[189] There is a comparable bid for a leading role in «'Ονειρεμένη προσευχή» (1931). There the poet asks Christ that his mind may be the light of the star that brought the Magi to Bethlehem, and his works rays of light like those the shepherds saw. This overreaching poetic ambition— to be the author of divine signs— belies the simple plea of the first two couplets for protection from the evils of the world, and the desire to stand before Christ after death with the simplicity of an infant. The poem is only an apparent act of devotion, 'a *dreamed* prayer' (Palamas 1962-69: IX, 352).

Stanzas 7-9 introduce the explicit concept of ἀπιστία and the first two of many Biblical personae other than Christ and Thomas:

Νὰ εἴμουν τῆς ἀπιστίας μακάρι
μαθητής,
μπρὸς νὰ σταθῶ στὴ θεία Σου χάρη
ἀρνητής,

Ἐσὲ ὡς ἀρνήθη σὲ μιὰ φρούδα,
μιὰ δειλὴ
στιγμή του ὁ Πέτρος Σου, τοῦ Ἰούδα
τὸ φιλὶ

κάλλιο νὰ σοῦ ἔδινα, Ἰησοῦ μου
καὶ Ραββὶ
παρὰ ὁ δαρμὸς τοὺ λογικοῦ μου
ποῦ μὲ σβεῖ.

This single sentence spread across three stanzas is a fine example of compression and complex organization which could stand on its own. It does, however, contain an ambiguity which I cannot definitively resolve. It is a question of whether τῆς ἀπιστίας μαθητής refers to Thomas or Judas. If one reads the phrase as 'unbelieving disciple' then it clearly points to Thomas. But ἀπιστία can mean 'disloyalty' or 'perfidy' as well as 'disbelief'. If τῆς ἀπιστίας μαθητής is understood as 'perfidious disciple' it could point to Judas, the betrayer.[190] Each interpretation gives a logical structure of meaning to this complex sentence, but the two structures are different.

If we take the first two lines to refer to Thomas, then we see an ascending scale of crime from disbelief through denial to betrayal, all of which would be better than the speaker's actual state, destroyed by the

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190 Or, conceivably, to Peter, the 'denier', referred to and then named in the lines that follow.

scourge of reason. If, on the other hand, we take τῆς ἀπιστίας μαθητής as referring to Judas, we see a chiastic structure. Stanza 7 alludes first to Judas and then to Peter; stanzas 8-9a refer explicitly first to Peter's denial and then to the kiss of Judas, synonymous with betrayal.

It might be objected that the former interpretation distances the speaker's state from the unbelief of Thomas, with whom in the first five lines of the poem he appears to be identified. However, that identification is in any case problematic, as I have already suggested. Thomas did not believe at first, but when he saw the risen Jesus he was immediately convinced, whereas the speaker's wish that even 'once' (μιὰ φορά, stanza 3) he might be a worshipper of Christ is evidently unfulfilled.[191] If the speaker's identification with Thomas were sustained in stanzas 7-9, we would be faced with the rather strange implication that the situation of Thomas was worse than that of Judas. In view of these considerations, and because ἀπιστία is the defining characteristic of Thomas,[192] as ἄρνησις is of Peter and προδοσία (represented here by the kiss) of Judas, I am strongly inclined to read the first two lines of stanza 7 as referring to Thomas.

Verbal dependence on the Gospel sources in stanzas 7-9 is minimal. Palamas relies on the familiarity of the incidents to which he alludes. The verb ἀρνέομαι associated with the name Peter in stanza 8 is used by all four Evangelists.[193] In the case of Judas, Palamas takes two words from the Gospel (in addition to the name) to indicate the story of the betrayal: φιλί

[191] One reason, perhaps, why the denial of Peter and the betrayal of Judas seem preferable to the speaker's state is that these too did not involve permanent alienation. Peter's denial took place in what Palamas calls a 'cowardly moment' and even Judas repented (Matthew 27.3).

[192] In the service of Orthros for the first Sunday after Easter (Κυριακὴ τοῦ Θωμᾶ) Jesus is said to have shown the prints of the nails τῷ ἀπιστοῦντι μαθητῇ, and in John 20.27 Jesus tells Thomas μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος, ἀλλὰ πιστός.

[193] See for example Matthew 26.70, 72.

(compare φίλημα in Luke, or the verb κατεφίλησεν in Matthew and Mark) and Ραββί, with which Judas addresses Jesus at the moment of betrayal in Matthew and Mark.[194] In addressing Jesus as Ἰησοῦ μου καὶ Ραββί, the speaker is momentarily appropriating the role of Judas which he would prefer to his actual state.

From a Christian perspective the fundamental idea of stanzas 7-9 is outrageous. The poet would rather have denied Christ, and been, like Judas, instrumental in Christ's death than suffer his present anguish. This is as blasphemous as the Gypsy's casual reference to making the nails for the Crucifixion in the *Δωδεκάλογος*.[195] The sufferings of Christ have no reality for the speaker, let alone any redemptive efficacy; they serve only as metaphors for the his own mental pain.

In stanzas 10 and 11 the speaker's state of mind is now described in rather different terms, not as ἀπιστία or the scourge of reason, but, through Biblical metaphors, as the simultaneous affirmation of contraries. He is both the Pharisee and the Tax Collector of the parable,[196] Martha as well as Mary.[197] Here the speaker is not only dramatizing his state of mind, but also contesting Jesus' ethical preferences for the Tax Collector and Mary. Curiously the state of mind implied in these metaphors does not seem to

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[194] Luke 22.48, Matthew 26.49, and Mark 14.45.

[195] See p.67.

[196] Luke 18.9-14. In an uncollected satirical poem, «Φαρισαῖοι καὶ τελῶναι» (1888: for text and publication details see Appendix, pp.370-72), Palamas also resists the Biblical discrimination, condemning both Pharisee and tax collector. The poem retells the parable, considerably amplified, and then turns to the modern representatives of the two groups: the Pharisees may not have changed, but the tax collectors are no longer repentant. The poem ends with a plea to God not to be fooled again, to strike down the Pharisee but not to forgive the tax collector. Two details which are not Biblical, the Pharisee's upright bearing and the tax collector's ἤμαρτον, reappear in «Θωμᾶς», indicating that Palamas' conception of the parable remained constant over forty years.

[197] Luke 10.38-42. See p.47.

have much to do with ἀπιστία, and being both Pharisee and Tax Collector, both Mary and Martha, does not necessarily imply anguish or painful self-division. Besides, elsewhere Palamas seems to commend such internal duality, as for example in quatrain 30 of *Ὁ Κύκλος τῶν Τετράστιχων* (1929), where his translation of Goethe's 'oracular utterance' includes the πιστός/ἄπιστος dichotomy of Christ's words to Thomas:[198]

> Τοῦ Γκαῖτε μὲ ηὗρε μαντικὸς καὶ μιὰ γιὰ πάντα ὁ λόγος:
> «Μαζὶ καὶ πιστὸς καὶ ἄπιστος. Ἔτσι τὸν ἔπλασε ὁ Θεός».[199]

And in «Ὁ Θρίαμβος» (1915) he speaks of Lucretius with evident approval as ἐσὲ τὸν ἄπιστο πιστό, τὸν ἄθεο θρῆσκο ἐσένα .[200]

In stanza 12 of «Θωμᾶς» there is an implicit criticism of faith as praised by Christ in the story of Thomas:

> Στὴν πίστη ἐγὼ ποὺ γοργαδράχνει,
> δὲ θωρεῖ,
> τὸ ρώτημα εἶμαι ἀργὰ ποὺ ψάχνει
> γιὰ νὰ βρῇ.

This blind faith which 'quickly apprehends' what it 'does not see' alludes to Christ's words to Thomas, μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες. As the 'question that slowly seeks to discover', the speaker is like Thomas, to whom Jesus said ὅτι ἑώρακάς με, πεπίστευκας,[201] though this questioning seems broader than Thomas' temporary unbelief. It suggests the spirit of scientific enquiry ('science' appears as a positive value in stanza 16), and that reason is something more than the 'scourge' of stanza 9. It is by

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198 For the Gospel source see p.124 n.192.

199 Palamas 1962-69: IX, 257.

200 Palamas 1962-69: VII, 51. Palamas evidently saw in Lucretius a fellow soul. He refers to him frequently in his prose works.

201 John 20.29.

no means clear in stanza 12 that 'faith' is preferred to 'question'. The striking displacement of the main subject ('To faith *I* [. . .] am the question') suggests the poet's ego contests Christ's view of faith.

Palamas now returns to depicting a more obvious state of self-division: the eagerness to worship is set against the 'cold breath' of 'doubt', dream against reality (stanzas 13-14):

'Εκεῖ ποὺ ὀρέγομαι νὰ ψάλλω
Σοῦ ὡσαννά,[202]
μ' ὄρεξην ἄλλη, ψάλσιμο ἄλλο
μοῦ ἀρχινᾶ

μέσα μου ἡ ἄϋπνη ἀμφιβολία,
κρύα πνοή, νά !
Κι ἂν ἡ Ραχὴλ τ' ὄνειρο, ἡ Λία
μὲ ξυπνᾶ.

The last two lines cleverly encapsulate the story of Laban's deception of Jacob over his two daughters. 'Jacob served [Laban] seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her' (the dream); but after the wedding feast it was the elder daughter Leah whom Laban brought to Jacob, and with whom Jacob lay, thinking she was Rachel, 'and in the morning behold it was Leah' (the waking reality). In terms of the source Rachel and Leah represent beauty and ugliness. Leah's 'eyes were weak' but Rachel was καλὴ τῷ εἴδει καὶ ὡραία τῇ ὄψει σφόδρα.[203] The introduction of Rachel at this point, exactly halfway through the poem, serves to focus attention once more on beauty, one of the

[202] Note that Palamas uses the Hosanna of the Entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11.9) to express the desire to worship, in marked contrast to Elytis: in *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* the narrator appropriates the Hosanna to express recognition of his own pre-eminence (see pp.348-51).

[203] Genesis 29.15-25. There may also purely personal factors in Palamas' interest in the Biblical Rachel: see his *Γράμματα στὴ Ραχήλ* (Palamas 1985).

two key concepts in the poem, but it is difficult to decide whether she represents the ἄχραντη ὀμορφιά of the first and last stanzas, which as object of worship must be identified with the 'divine vision' of stanza 25.

In terms of what has gone before Rachel must represent the 'Hosanna' (the desire to worship), or the 'sweetness of heaven' of stanza 4, and Leah the 'other psalm', the 'cold breath' of 'doubt', or 'the poison'. It is more difficult to decide what Rachel represents in terms of the vision of the future in stanzas 15-19. It is tempting to see this vision ('Sometimes other heavens open before me') as an unfolding of the 'dream' which is Rachel, and to identify Rachel with Aphrodite, who is here both the goddess and the planet (Venus) by whose 'light' these 'other heavens' are 'illumined', and also a personification of 'science'. This future world is rich in 'art', 'wisdom', 'virtue' and 'knowledge' (like the ancient world destroyed by Christianity in the *Φλογέρα*),[204] but despite the presence of Aphrodite it lacks 'its highest beauty' (stanza 19):

Μέλλεται κόσμος τρισμεγάλος,
χαροποιός
μὰ τὸ ὕψιστο τοῦ λείπει κάλλος:
ὁ Θεός !

Palamas' utopias are the products of the poetic mind informed by science, or of scientific vision tempered by imagination: εἶναι ἡ γῆς τῆς ἐπιστήμης Ἀφροδίτη Χρυσαυγή (stanza 16). Here the goddess Aphrodite is an element in the poet's imaginative vision, and, as with all the pagan divinities, the question of her existence does not really arise for the modern mind. Consequently, she cannot guarantee the truth or reality of the vision. The vision need not lack anything the poet's imagination can add to it, but it lacks the one thing that could guarantee its reality: the transcendent

[204] See p.106.

deity in which the poet does not believe. Palamas is revealed in this poem not as an unbelieving Christian, but as an unbelieving Platonist (or Idealist). All that is beautiful points to 'the beautiful' but he does not believe that 'the beautiful' exists. In this and other poems, Palamas the unbelieving Platonist uses Christ, the dominant image of God in contemporary Greek culture, to articulate the dilemma of his unbelief, which is essentially a poetic dilemma: his poetry is continually striving for the unattainable. His reason insists that the object of his longing, depicted repeatedly and under many guises in his poetry, does not exist.

Recognition of Palamas' lack of belief in Christ is essential to an understanding of the symbolic function of Christ in this poem. Christ has, of course, a dual role in «Θωμᾶς». His earthly sufferings provide a metaphor for the poet's anguish, while a powerful misrepresentation, setting aside almost all Christian doctrine, makes Christ as God the Ideal Form of Beauty, whose purest manifestation is Light. The dual role is summed up in the two words: Φῶς. Πονῶ.

Θεός, Ἰησοῦς and Χριστός, the names which Palamas gives to 'light' and 'beauty', are male, but I do not think Palamas means his ὕψιστο κάλλος to be seen as exclusively male. The θεία βλέψη of stanza 25 is not only grammatically feminine, it is also κυρά. Perhaps we should then identify Rachel with Aphrodite and both of them with God. What all three have in common is non-existence: Rachel is 'a dream'; Aphrodite an element in the poet's vision, a personification; and God 'is absent'.

The remainder of the poem continues to explore the two aspects of Christ, as light or beauty and as suffering, with many more allusions to the Gospels. The words τὸ ὕψιστο [. . .] κάλλος: ὁ Θεος! are immediately followed by an appeal to this absent God who is 'light' and also Christ with his earthly history who would have to traverse time to perform a miracle for the speaker (stanzas 20-22). The dichotomy of 'soul' and 'mind' (stanza 22)

is followed by that of heart and 'reason' which must be made brothers (stanza 23) and finally by that of 'thought' and the 'divine vision' it 'tramples' (stanza 25). The choice of the verb πατῶ here suggests a reversal of Christ's victory over death in the Easter liturgy:

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν, θανάτῳ θάνατον πατήσας.[205]

At first, though, 'thought' seems to be presented as a positive force and something else unspecified as destructive (stanza 24):

Ἡ σκέψη ἂς θέλη νὰ μὲ στέψῃ
βασιλιά,
μέσα μοὺ κάτι πάει νὰ ρέψῃ,
τρισαλιά !

Here, surely, Palamas is alluding to Jesus' realization that the people who had witnessed the Feeding of the Five Thousand 'were about to come and take him' ἵνα ποιήσωσιν αὐτὸν βασιλέα.[206] This constitutes an oblique and rather strange appropriation of Christ by the speaker— a Christ who cannot believe in his own role, as if the doubt of Thomas had become Christ's self-doubt. And it is immediately followed (stanzas 26-8) by an explicit appropriation of Christ's sufferings on Golgotha, the two linked through the notion of crowning :

Τ' ἀκάνθινο στεφάνι, δός μου,
Γολγοθᾶ,
ὑπερτάτο ὀνείρο τοῦ κόσμου
μὲ μεθᾶ.

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[205] Frequently repeated in Orthros for Easter Sunday. See Sikelianos' more obvious appropriations of these words (p.212). Since Palamas then calls 'thought' a 'scorpion' (see below) he probably also had in mind Luke 10.19, where Jesus gives the disciples the power to tread (πατεῖν) on scorpions.

[206] John 6.15.

Τὸ σῶμα, τὸ αἷμα Σου, Χριστέ μου,
γιὰ νὰ πιῶ,
χτύπα τὴ σκέψη, σκότωσέ μου
τὸ σκορπιό,

δίχως νὰ ψάχνω ἄθλιος μπροστά Σου
γυρευτής,
τῆς ἄχραντης ἁγνὰ ὁμορφιᾶς Σου
λατρευτής.

In the first of these three final stanzas Palamas juxtaposes the crown of thorns and the poet's 'dream' (compare stanzas 14-19), apparently complete this time (the superlative form ὑπέρτατο suggests) with its ὕψιστο κάλλος; but the relation between them is not clear. Are they simply juxtaposed like Φῶς and Πονῶ? Or is the poet here accepting that the harsh reality of his unbelief (the crown of thorns) must wake him from the illusory vision with which he is intoxicated (μὲ μεθᾶ)? Palamas now gives a more precise focus to the notion of intoxication in the drinking of the eucharistic wine (Christ's blood).[207] This is only possible if the scorpion of thought is slain.[208] Thus stanza 27 reiterates the antinomy of stanza 26 through different metaphors. The final stanza presents two distinct kinds of religious devotion. The first, that of the 'wretched suppliant', which is

[207] 'Body' and 'blood' both seem to be objects of the verb 'drink', reflecting, perhaps, the Orthodox communion custom of receiving a fragment of the consecrated bread with the wine from a spoon. The association of intoxication with the drinking of Christ's blood introduces a subversive Dionysiac element into the perception of the eucharist. This is an idea explored extensively by Sikelianos (see §3.7).

[208] Stanza 27 begins with 'body' ends with 'scorpion'. The missing middle term which connects them is 'bread': the identification of body and bread in the Liturgy, and the near antithesis of bread and scorpion in Jesus' rhetorical question. 'What father among you, if his son asks for a loaf (ἄρτον), will give him a stone . . . or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion' (Luke 11.11-12).

explicitly excluded from what the speaker desires, is in fact a typically Christian form of devotion, especially in the context of the Eucharist which Palamas has just invoked. Consider, for example, these extracts from the Prayer of the Cherubic Hymn in the Liturgy of John Chrysostom:

> Ἐπίβλεψον ἐπ' ἐμὲ τὸν ἁμαρτωλὸν καὶ ἀχρεῖον δοῦλόν σου [. . .] καὶ ἰκάνωσόν με [. . .] ἱερουργῆσαι τὸ ἅγιον καὶ ἄχραντόν σου σῶμα καὶ τὸ τίμιον αἷμα.

In «Θωμᾶς» the drinking of Christ's blood is a metaphor dissociated from the concepts of sin and salvation central to the Liturgy. What the poet wants to partake of and to worship is not the ἄχραντον σῶμα of Christ, not the ἄχραντα μυστήρια (as the sacramental elements are often called), but the ἄχραντη ὁμορφιά which Christ as God represents in this poem; and this is essentially the poet's own vision, a vision in which, except in moments of intoxication when rational thought is suspended, he cannot sustain belief.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter will, I hope, have indicated that attempts such as that of Moschos to make Palamas into a Christian (of however doubting a kind) cannot be sustained in the face of a close analysis of the relevant poetry. Even Tsatsos' more modest claim, that 'if one of the two worlds [pagan and Christian] which struggle [. . .] in the soul of the poet has the ascendancy, it is certainly [. . .] the Christian' would be difficult to justify.[209] The Christianity one observes in the poetry of Palamas is, in any case, distorted. Christ is, for the most part, either marginalized or aestheticized; Christian doctrines of Incarnation and Redemption largely ignored. Palamas does not hesitate to rewrite Gospel incidents to suit his poetic ends, treating the Bible with as much, but no more, respect than any other literary source. In marginalizing Christ and enhancing the status of the Panagia, notably through suppressing the incarnational references of language drawn from Byzantine hymns in the *Φλογέρα*, Palamas brings the Virgin as near as he can to the status of a pagan goddess. But far from making the kind of syncretistic assertions characteristic of Sikelianos, Palamas, in the *Φλογέρα* at least, drives a wedge between paganism and Christianity: the Flute condemns the Christian world, the emperor the pagan; there is no synthesis, only a holding together in tension of irreconcilable opposites.

The struggle of the Christian and pagan worlds in Palamas is an ethical and aesthetic struggle. In terms of metaphysical truth the struggle is a thing of the past, and both sides have lost (this is the message of the *Δωδεκάλογος*). The metaphysical issue is post-Christian theism, and this has an aesthetic dimension: the validity in poetry of the language of the divine. For Palamas the language of the divine has not yet detached itself entirely from ontology, has not become pure metaphor. Consequently the

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[209] Tsatsos 1936: 224.

poetry remains vulnerable to metaphysical doubt. One solution, as in «Θωμᾶς», is to dramatize the doubt, confronting the impulse to worship with the nonexistence of the object that it seeks. That object is 'highest beauty' and it is given the name God, and this God is identified with Christ. But the poem tramples the Christ of the Gospels— the poet would rather have been Judas— just as surely as the poet's scepticism 'tramples the divine vision'.

«Θωμᾶς» is the reply, but not a contentious reply, to the Flute's condemnation of the aesthetic barbarity of Christianity. There are two specific examples of this barbarity: the Byzantine conversion of the Parthenon and the action of Constantine in placing an image of his own head on a headless statue of Apollo (ὁ ὡραῖος θεός). The gods see their revenge in being worshipped by Christians under different forms; and the Flute suggests that what is of aesthetic value in the Christian world is derived from the pagan. Even within the Christian tradition the impulse to add beauty to the attributes of Christ has proved impossible to resist, and the Good Friday Encomia echo the laments for Adonis. This is the beginning of the revenge of the gods, and it is taken to its conclusion in «Θωμᾶς» where Christ, identified with κάλλος as well as φῶς, has become, in effect, 'Apollo, the beautiful god'— more effectively than through the bare use of the epithet Χρυσοκόμης in the early poem «Χαιρετισμός ἀναστάσιμος». Surprisingly, then, «Θωμᾶς» is revealed as Palamas' most syncretistic poem, in which he places the head of Apollo on the wounded body of Christ, the barbaric Nazarene of the *Φλογέρα*.

The synthesis of Christian and ancient Greek elements in art, and particularly in poetry, tends to be to the disadvantage of the Christian. Not only does Christianity subordinate aesthetic to moral and doctrinal considerations, but the range of its mythology is also much more restricted. Sikelianos' syncretism, more consistent, more systematic and more

consciously directed than the occasional syncretism of Palamas, is clearly weighted in favour of the ancient world, an unabashed attempt to integrate Christ into the Olympian Pantheon.

3

The language of the 'Fifth Gospel': Sikelianos takes up the 'Myth of Jesus'

3.1 Introduction

I have shown that there exists in the work of Palamas an unresolved but artistically fruitful tension between the values of ancient culture and the Christian values of Orthodoxy; and I have argued against the established view that in the *Φλογέρα* Palamas achieves a synthesis of all stages of Greek culture. In the work of Angelos Sikelianos (1884-1951) there is no conflict between classical and Christian values (as he sees them); nor is there any trace of the hostility towards Christ or the Virgin represented by the Flute and other voices in Palamas, (though Sikelianos does balk at the Crucifixion);[1] and, whether or not Sikelianos' cultural synthesis is judged poetically successful, in his appropriations of the figures and language of Christianity the determination to integrate Christian and pagan mythology is evident. The integration is an unequal one, though; for what Sikelianos attempts, essentially, is to incorporate Christianity into paganism, often reinterpreting the central figures of Christianity, Christ and the Panagia, in terms of pagan prototypes.[2]

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[1] See pp.155-6, 246-9.

[2] Vogiatzoglou puts it more contentiously, in saying (1993: 247) that Sikelianos 'attempts to deliver Christian faith from its ascetic austerity and to reunite it with its origins, that is

This syncretistic reinterpretation is not much in evidence in Sikelianos' most ambitious attempt at integration, *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* (1919-47).[3] There, the integration was to have been on a larger scale: but the work was, significantly, never completed, and, as it stands, contains no more than occasional pointers to the way in which its declared aim was to have been achieved. However, a brief consideration of that aim will provide a useful starting point for this enquiry.

The fourth part of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* has the title «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο». It begins with an introduction, part prose, part verse, printed in italics: evidently a summary indication of passages never fully realized.[4] This introduction relates, in prose, how the Poet in the course of his ascent of Mount Helicon hears 'a bell, which calls [people] in some distant village, he supposes, to the *Chairetismoi* of the Mother of God' (the Service of the Akathistos Hymn); but in the verse extract that immediately follows the bell is 'a trembling voice, calling timidly to Pan'. Thus, the everyday experience of hearing a church bell in the Greek countryside is transformed, in verse, into something at once more ancient, more universal, and indeed pagan.

The bell is not all that the Poet hears on the slopes of Helicon, for, in a most peculiar image, 'the Myth of Jesus which had fallen into the darkness cries out like a bird that has slipped from the nest'.[5] The Poet is

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with the ancient Greek world.'

[3] A version entitled *Τὸ Ποίημα* was printed in 1918 but never circulated. Extracts were published between 1919 and 1935 and the surviving parts collected for the first time in 1947 in Sikelianos 1946-47: III (Katsimbalis 1946: 7, 9, 15-16; Xydis 1973: 134; Savidis 1980: 36).

[4] Sikelianos 1965-69: IV, 71-2.

[5] Nest imagery is a recurrent feature of Sikelianos' poetry (see in particular the opening of *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*), but this image for the fate of the 'Myth of Jesus' may have been prompted by certain sayings of Jesus involving birds: ἔχουσι καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατασκηνώσεις, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἔχει ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνῃ (Matthew 8.20); and οὐχὶ δύο στρουθία ἀσσαρίου πωλεῖται; καὶ ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν

moved by 'Mercy' and, 'picking up the Myth, he resumes his ascent of the sacred mountain, in order to bring it up to the summit'. In this conceit Sikelianos encapsulates his own pretensions as poet in relation to the 'Myth of Jesus': his self-appointed task is to raise it from the darkness and set it on Helicon, sacred to the Muses, to take its place among the myths of the ancient Greeks.

Discussing *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* in the 'Prologue' (1942) to *Λυρικὸς Βίος*, Sikelianos gives some clues as to what this darkness is into which the Myth had sunk. He draws distinctions between 'the dogma and organization' of Christianity and the 'Myth of Christianity'; and between 'the exterior historical form' of the Myth and its 'interior transcendental dynamism'. It appears that he wants to detach the Myth both from its historical roots and from the teachings and practices of the Church. For Sikelianos the Myth 'is rooted' not in events in Judaea in the first century AD, but 'in the history of the entire human race'. It is only as the 'religious "subconscious"' that the Myth 'still contains for man an eternal significance'.[6] Something of the nature of that significance is suggested at the end of the introduction to «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο», where the Poet, apparently continuing his ascent of Helicon, 'begins to relate to men the Gospel [. . .] telling the stories of those figures (πρόσωπα) who for centuries were and are the mystic mirror of souls'.

At this point the italicized summary gives way to completed quatrains, but the matter of the first 13 quatrains is still introductory: it is still *about* the 'Fifth Gospel'. The first of the introductory quatrains names the Four Evangelists. Each has his familiar symbol: Angel, Lion, Bull and Eagle. The second quatrain tells us that the Poet himself, by clear implication the Fifth Evangelist (Κ' ἐγώ, στερνὸς καὶ ξέχωρος), has no comparable symbol, but 'a handful of Olympian wheat'. In other words,

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οὐ πεσεῖται ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἄνευ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν (Matthew 10.29).

6 Sikelianos 1965-69: I, 35-6.

what he brings to the 'Myth of Jesus' is the spirit of pagan Greek mythology. Not only does each grain become a 'priceless stem of pearl', but each grain is also the 'key to measureless time': not the bounded time of historical Christianity, but the unbounded time of myth.[7]

The association of Christianity with ancient Greek mythology has, in the hands of a Greek writer, an added dimension. The title *Easter of the Hellenes* is in itself an appropriative gesture, not only asserting a special relationship between the festival and the Greek people, but also implying the integration of Christianity into ancient Greek culture.[8] To incorporate the 'Myth of Jesus' into ancient Greek mythology is, for Sikelianos, to Hellenize that myth. Syncretism is not his only strategy: in those parts of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* dealing with the life of the Virgin Mary he suppresses almost all the elements of Jewish custom and ritual in his principal source.[9] This also facilitates the syncretistic fusion, separating the Christian 'myth' from its particular historical and cultural context.

Syncretism and Hellenization are closely related key elements in Sikelianos' treatment of Christian material. In addition, he shares with Palamas a tendency to aestheticize and eroticize Christ, but in Sikelianos' case this also extends to the Panagia, notably in the treatment of the Annunciation. More often and more obviously than Palamas, Sikelianos appropriates Christian language to the persona of the poet, so as to suggest that the poet takes on the role of, or even displaces, Christ.

Savidis has distinguished 'two periods in Sikelianos' creative interest in the Christian Myth'.[10] He sees the first period as beginning with the publication in 1917 of *Ἡ Συνείδηση τῆς Πίστης* and including *Μήτηρ*

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[7] Sikelianos 1965-69: IV, 72.

[8] Until the time of the War of Independence the popular meaning of "Ελληνοι/ες was 'ancient Greeks'.

[9] See §3.5.

[10] Savidis 1980: 36.

Θεοῦ (1917-19) and the unfinished *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, first drafted in 1918 or earlier.[11] The second period distinguished by Savidis belongs to the 1940s, and consists primarily of the verse dramas *Ὁ Χριστὸς στὴ Ρώμη* (1946) and *Χριστὸς Λυόμενος* (1947), to which Savidis adds two shorter poems, «Ἄγραφον» (1941) and «Διόνυσος ἐπὶ λίκνῳ» (1945).[12] In distinguishing these two periods, Savidis was careful to note that he did so 'on the basis of the published evidence', aware, no doubt, of the then unpublished juvenilia of Sikelianos, which provide evidence of another, earlier period of interest in Christianity as the subject matter of poetry. A substantial body of these juvenilia, which were probably written around the turn of the century, was published in 1989. Their editor, Tsarlamba-Kaklamani, remarks that a 'significant number of these hitherto unknown verses refer to Jesus Christ'. She singles out as particularly relevant in this context «(Φανταστικὴ Μυθολογία)», «Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος» and a third, untitled poem which begins Ὁ κορνιαχτὸς μοῦ ἐτύφλωνε τὰ μάτια, and she tells us that there are two further compositions referring to Christ which she has not included.[13]

I have excluded from consideration the dramatic works, as being formally distinct from the rest of Sikelianos' poetry. When one considers only Sikelianos' non-dramatic poetry, the middle period (Savidis' 'first period') assumes overwhelming importance. Savidis suggests that Sikelianos' interest in the 'Christian Myth' in the poems published in and after 1917 was connected with the First World War (and that his renewed interest in the 1940s was connected with the Second).[14] More obviously significant, however, in relation to the middle period was the visit which Sikelianos made with Kazantzakis to Athos in November-December 1914.

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[11] See p.137 n.3.

[12] Savidis 1980: 41

[13] Tsarlamba-Kaklamani 1989: 223-4. On the dating of the juvenilia see *ibid.* 179-94.

[14] Savidis 1980: 41.

The journal which Sikelianos kept for some weeks before and during the trip (published posthumously as *Τὸ ἁγιορείτικο ἡμερολόγιο*)[15] provides ample evidence of his intense interest in both the visual and the verbal imagery of Orthodoxy. He describes icons which made an impression on him in the monasteries of Athos, lists ecclesiastical terminology, and transcribes short excerpts from Byzantine hymns and other liturgical texts. It is only in works of the middle period— and to those named by Savidis we should add Parts III («Ὁ Χωριάτικος Γάμος») and IV («Δέσποινα Ὑπομονή») of *Ἡ Συνείδηση τῆς Γυναίκας* (1916) — that Sikelianos makes extensive use of Biblical, Apocryphal and liturgical sources; and even among those works only Parts IV-X of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* could be said to be based primarily on such sources.

Prevelakis asserts that 'if Sikelianos' poetic production is studied statistically it will be shown to be equally divided between antiquity and Christianity as much in its themes as in its symbols.'[16] But if we exclude the dramas and count as poems on Christian themes the three long and two short poems mentioned by Savidis and those added in the foregoing paragraph, we are talking about less than one quarter of *Λυρικὸς Βίος*. Allusion to Christian texts, and reference to Christian themes, are not of course limited to these poems, and occur sporadically (often as no more than passing references) throughout Sikelianos' work, at least from the poems written during and shortly after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 (collected as *Ἐπίνικοι Α'*). On the other hand, even the works referred to as being on Christian themes are, with the exception of some parts of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* and «Ἄγραφον», pervaded by allusions to ancient Greek mythology and only intermittently concerned with Christian themes; and the first three parts of both *Ἡ Συνείδηση τῆς Πίστης* and *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* are primarily concerned with themes from pagan

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15 Konstantoulaki-Hantzou 1988.

16 Prevelakis 1984: 134.

mythology.

The quantitative parity of antiquity and Christianity in the poetry of Sikelianos proposed by Prevelakis is, at least, questionable, but there can be no doubt about their qualitative disparity: Sikelianos' work as a whole indicates a clear privileging of ancient pagan culture over Christianity; and, while Christianity was only of central importance to Sikelianos during three relatively brief periods, ancient myth was a constant source of inspiration throughout his career. A greater imaginative affinity with the ancient than with Christian culture is a feature common to the poetry of Sikelianos and Palamas alike.

While Palamas' supposed identification of the Virgin Mary with Athena and Aphrodite proved to be a critical construct which cannot be located within the text of the *Φλογέρα*, such identifications— of both Christ and the Virgin with figures from ancient mythology— are frequent and often explicit in the work of Sikelianos. In «Στ' Ὄσιου Λουκᾶ τὸ μοναστήρι» (1937), for example, the women gathered around the Epitaphios on the night of Maundy Thursday are there 'to lament the dead Adonis, hidden under the flowers'.[17] In «'Αντρίκειο Βάφτισμα» (1917) the poet addresses ἐσέ, Τιτάνα / στὸ Σταυρό and later addresses the same crucified persona as Ὦ Βάκχε, Βάκχε,[18] and, similarly, in «Τὸ Κατορθωμένο Σῶμα» (1943) he addresses 'Εσταυρωμένε Βάκχε.[19] In

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[17] Sikelianos 1965-69: V, 48. Contrast Milton, who, maintaining a Christian tradition of patristic origin, sees Adonis and the other Greek gods (and indeed those of other pagan religions) as the forms taken by fallen angels to lure men from God, and associates Adonis in particular with leading women astray (*Paradise Lost* I.446-52, 508-21).

[18] Sikelianos 1965-69: III, 189, 190.

[19] Sikelianos 1965-69: III, 248. See p.336 below for the visual image of a crucified Orpheus/Bacchus which Sikelianos published in *'Αντίδωρο* (1943). The reference to Lilith as σταυρωμένη / στὸ σταυρὸ τῆς ἱερῆς Θηλύτητάς Σου in «Λιλίθ» (1927) is of a different order: Lilith is a figure from Jewish, not Greek, mythology; and it is not a question of identification with Christ since this expression is followed by a direct comparison of Lilith with 'the Son of Man' (Sikelianos 1965-69: V, 102).

«Διόνυσος–Ἰησοῦς» we find a sequence of exclamations implying the identity of Jesus with Iacchus (the god invoked in the Eleusinian procession, often identified with Dionysus) and Apollo.[20]

Some of the identifications involving the Virgin are consistent with those involving Christ, since they follow mother-son relationships in ancient mythology. In «Θεῖος ὄνειρος» (1952) we find 'Night' addressed as Μητέρα τῶν τιτάνων Θεῶν, Μητέρα τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας,[21] and in «Ἱερὰ Ὁδός» (1935) Sikelianos compares the she-bear to 'the Great Goddess, the eternal Mother' whom 'here [at Eleusis] they call Demeter'— mother of Iacchus— and who 'elsewhere was Alcmena or Panagia'.[22] As Virgin as well as Mother, the Panagia can also be identified with virgin goddesses of antiquity such as Artemis or Athena. In «Ὕμνος στὴν Ὀρθία Ἀρτέμιδα» (1915) Artemis is addressed as Ὁδηγήτρα, a title which belongs (usually in the form Ὁδηγήτρια) to the Panagia;[23] while in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* the poet declares to the Panagia that Greece Σὲ κοιτάζει ἅμα κρατεῖς στὸ χέρι Σου τὸ δόρυ, alluding to traditional representations of Athena.[24] The verse epigraph to «Ἀπὸ τὸν Πρόλογο τοῦ "Πλήθωνα"» (1914) invites us to identify the poem's subject with Helen, and yet she is addressed by titles of the Virgin such as Παντάνασσα and Ἐλεοῦσα.[25]

Yet the mere interchange of names or attributes in these instances constitutes only in a very marginal sense subversion of the language of Christian texts. The name 'Jesus', and the titles 'Christ' and 'Panagia', while common in Biblical and liturgical texts, belong not just to wider Christian

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[20] See pp.253-4.

[21] Sikelianos 1965-69: VI, 98.

[22] Sikelianos 1965-69: V, 42-3.

[23] Sikelianos 1965-69: III, 87. See pp.84-6 above.

[24] Sikelianos 1965-69: IV, 140.

[25] Sikelianos 1965-69: II, 143-4.

discourse but also to everyday Greek discourse: and titles of the Virgin such as Ὁδηγήτρια and Παντάνασσα are more likely to be familiar from the names of icons or the dedications of churches than from liturgical sources. However, Sikelianos' identification of pagan and Christian names and titles is sometimes associated with more specifically textual allusions. In the poem in which Artemis is called Ὁδηγήτρα, for example, another invocation of her begins,

> Ὦ Ὀρθία·
> ὁποὺ ἔταξες λιμάνι τῆς καρδιᾶς Σου [. . .].[26]

clearly echoing the Akathistos Hymn (*oikos* 5):

> χαῖρε, ὅτι λιμένα τῶν ψυχῶν ἑτοιμάζεις.

The importation of Christian language into contexts which are otherwise either exclusively pagan (as in «Ὕμνος στὴν Ὀρθία Ἀρτέμιδα»), or hybrid, combining thematic elements from the pagan and Christian traditions, is a distinctively (though not exclusively) Sikelianic mode of subversion of Christian language.[27]

There is a difference in the way in which Palamas and Sikelianos handle their Biblical and liturgical sources. Vogiatzoglou states that 'whilst the references in *Ἡ Φλογέρα τοῦ Βασιλιᾶ* to Byzantine hymnography take the form of a rewriting of Byzantine texts [. . .], the dialogue of Sikelianos' Christian compositions with ecclesiastical poetry is less extensive and usually less easily observed.'[28] It is less easily observed because the imagery which Sikelianos draws from liturgical texts is more thoroughly integrated into the poetry, so that we rarely find (outside of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*) whole phrases or sentences culled from

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[26] Sikelianos 1965-69: III, 86.

[27] Many more examples will be found in this chapter, particularly in §§3.3 and 3.7.

[28] Vogiatzoglou 1993: 237.

Byzantine hymns or Biblical or Apocryphal texts lying, as it were, on the surface in verbatim or near-verbatim quotation or close paraphrase.

Sarah Ekdawi, writing in 1991, concludes that 'no research has been done to date on Sikelianos's biblical allusions', nor, she might have added, on his liturgical allusions.[29] This situation has now been somewhat modified, by Ekdawi's own work in respect of some of the lyrical poems in the groups entitled «Ἀφροδίτης Οὐρανίας», «Ὀρφικά» and «Ἴμεροι», and by that of Vogiatzoglou in respect of some of the poems from *Πρόλογος στὴ Ζωή*.[30] This chapter will make a further contribution to the identification of Sikelianos' Biblical and liturgical sources, but it cannot claim to be a comprehensive study of this aspect of his poetry.

The structure of this chapter (like that on Palamas) is basically chronological. §3.2 deals with the image of Christ in the juvenilia, where syncretism is already evident. It is only in the middle period poems that Sikelianos shares Palamas' tendency to focus on the Panagia and other female figures of the Gospels in preference to Christ. The poems of this period related to the Panagia are dealt with in §3.3 (poems from *Πρόλογος στὴ Ζωή*), §3.4 (*Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*) and §3.5 (*Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*). Discussion of passages relating to Christ is not excluded from these sections, though the main focus is the Panagia. Those parts of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* dealing with Christ are discussed in §3.6 and contrasted with the very different approach to Christ in the later poem «Ἄγραφον». §3.7, on Sikelianos' persistent identification of Christ with Dionysus, is a partial exception to the chapter's chronological progression, since it includes two poems from the fourth *Συνείδηση* (1917) which antedate *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*. However, they are so closely connected in theme with a number of poems from the 1940s that it seemed imperative to

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[29] Ekdawi 1991: 12. However, some useful information on Sikelianos' Biblical and liturgical sources can be found in Xydis 1973 and 1978.

[30] Ekdawi 1991; Vogiatzoglou 1993.

discuss the two groups together.

3.2 The 'marble Christ' of the Juvenilia

In this section I shall discuss two of Sikelianos' three early poems on Christ identified in §3.1. These poems have some features in common with poems of Palamas such as «Θυγατέρες τῆς Σιών» and «Θωμᾶς», notably the insistence on Christ's beauty. There can, of course, be no question of influence, since these two poems of Palamas were not published until the 1920s; though, when he wrote the juvenilia, Sikelianos may have known Palamas' «Χαιρετισμὸς ἀναστάσιμος» (published in 1898), in which Christ is given the Apollonian title Χρυσοκόμης.[31] The juvenilia of Sikelianos differ from Palamas' poems on the myrophores and the Resurrection in focusing almost exclusively on Christ; and they differ from Palamas' early poems on Christ in their outright rejection of devotion to the Crucified (Palamas' Γλυκέ μου 'Εσταυρωμένε).[32]

In these juvenilia, we can see Sikelianos' first attempts to rewrite what he would later call 'the Myth of Jesus' in terms of Greek mythology. «(Φανταστικὴ Μυθολογία)»[33] brings together Jesus (ὁ Ναζωραῖος) and Zeus. The theme of the poem is ideal beauty and its embodiment in sculpture. It presents an entirely static image of Jesus kneeling before a block of marble. He is characterized from the start in terms of beauty: Στὴν καλλονὴ ἐγονάτιζε (line 1); σὰ θεὸς ὡραῖος (line 2). Jesus is also the sculptor whose 'one aim' is to realize in marble τὰ χείλη τὰ ὡραιότερα, τὸ πιὸ γλυκὺ τὸ μάτι (line 6)— evidently his own beauty (23-4). But he dare not take up the chisel, and for three nights remains

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[31] See pp.53-4.

[32] See p.59.

[33] Tsarlamba-Kaklamani 1989: 94-5. The brackets, apparently in the manuscript, may indicate that Sikelianos regarded the title as provisional. Tsarlamba-Kaklamani presents the poems in modified historical orthography (without graves), but in quotations from them I have, for consistency, restored the grave accents.

motionless before the marble, succeeding only in carving wrinkles on his own brow (11-15, 18). He suffers 'agony' and dies (16, 20-21), but in the moment of death his 'dream' is realized: Zeus appears and transforms his corpse into marble, and Jesus becomes a statue of which even Pheidias is envious (22-32).

Tsarlamba-Kaklamani describes Pheidias' envy (or does she mean Zeus' intervention?) as an 'ancient Greek intrusion into Christian myth'.[34] There is, however, at least on the surface, no recognizable Christian myth in the poem. Sikelianos has created a fragment of an 'imaginary mythology' which involves both Zeus and Jesus. The ethos of the poem, with its concentration on beauty, is more pagan than Christian: «(Φανταστικὴ Μυθολογία)» is in fact a fairly extreme example of the aestheticization of Jesus. The Jesus of the poem is entirely divorced from his historical context, his role in the Gospels, his ethical teachings and the Church's theological conceptions, and presented as an embodiment of ideal beauty, whose sole concern, as sculptor, is an aesthetic one. Nevertheless, the poem does contain echoes of the Gospel episodes: the Agony in Gethsemane, and the Transfiguration.

Sikelianos speaks of the Nazarene's inability to act in terms of 'agony': ἡ ἀγωνία ἐδιάβαινεν ἀπ' τ' ἄϋλον ὄνειρό του (line 16). In relation to Jesus, 'agony' is associated primarily with the ordeal in Gethsemane on the night before his death, of which Luke says, καὶ γενόμενος ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ ἐκτενέστερον προσηύχετο.[35] Sikelianos portrays the Nazarene kneeling (ἐγονάτιζε, lines 1 and 10). An unlikely position for a sculptor about to set to work, but this is the position which Jesus adopts, according to Luke, when he prays in Gethsemane: καὶ θεὶς τὰ

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[34] Tsarlamba-Kaklamani 1989: 151. It seems that her line reference is incorrect and that the comment is meant to apply to Zeus not Pheidias.

[35] Luke 22.44.

γόνατα προσηύχετο.[36]

The Nazarene's immobility before the marble lasts for 'days' (line 11), or, more specifically, extends over three nights (lines 12, 15):

'Ενύχτωσε τὴ μιὰ φορὰ ἐνύχτωσε τὴν ἄλλη
. . . . . .
'Η τρίτη νύχτα ἐπέρασε μπροστὰ στὸ μάρμαρό του.

It is on the third night that he dies (line 20). This could be seen as an inverted parallel with the prophecy of the Resurrection (τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθήσεται),[37] but the enumeration of the nights of wakefulness also offers a further parallel with Christ in Gethsemane. In Luke Christ prays once only, but in Matthew and Mark he does so three times, returning each time to find the disciples asleep. Matthew enumerates as follows:

καὶ προσελθὼν μικρὸν ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ προσευχόμενος [. . .] πάλιν ἐκ δευτέρου ἀπελθὼν προσηύξατο [. . .] καὶ ἀφεὶς αὐτοὺς πάλιν ἀπελθὼν προσηύξατο ἐκ τρίτου.[38]

It seems that Sikelianos was deliberately creating an analogue of the Agony. In both cases the 'agony' is a prelude to death, but death follows more immediately in Sikelianos.

The intervention of Zeus, at the moment of the Nazarene's death, has broad thematic and minor verbal parallels with Gospel accounts of the Transfiguration (lines 25-28):

Τότε ὁ Ζεὺς μὲ μιὰ φωνὴ σὰν γκιώνη
Τὸ θεῖον ἐκεῖνο τὸ νεκρό, μὲ θαῦμα, μαρμαρώνει,
Λέγοντας «'Αλλη καλλονὴ δὲ βρέθηκε στὴ φύσι.
Τὴ μεγαλόνοια πάνω του ἡ ἔμπνευσ' ἔχει σκαλίσει . . . »

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[36] Luke 22.41. In Matthew 26.39 and Mark 14.35 Jesus is prostrate.

[37] Matthew 17.23, 20.19.

[38] Matthew 26.39, 42, 44.

Zeus is present here primarily as a 'voice'. It is his voice, apparently, which, as it commends the Nazarene's beauty, effects the transformation of his body into marble. At the Transfiguration, God the Father was also present primarily as a voice (φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης) which commends Jesus ('this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased').[39] This voice is associated with the transformation of Jesus which Matthew describes as follows:

> καὶ ἔλαμψε τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, τὰ δὲ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς.[40]

In Sikelianos' poem the whiteness of the Nazarene has already been emphasized— ἦταν λευκὸς σὰν ἄγαλμα (line 2), τὸ μέτωπο τὸ πάλλευκο (18)— before his transformation into the permanent whiteness of marble.

However alien and pagan the context in which Sikelianos has placed the Nazarene, the appropriation involved extends beyond the mere identifier ὁ Ναζωραῖος, to include narrative motifs and words and phrases suggestive of the Gospels; and these NT resonances give some, albeit slight, Christian substance to the central figure of the poem.[41]

Even without the echoes of the Transfiguration, the particular juxtaposition of Zeus and Jesus in «(Φανταστικὴ Μυθολογία)» implies that Zeus, known as the 'Father of gods and men', has taken the place of the Christian 'God the Father'. But, rather than seeing in the poem 'an ancient Greek intrusion into Christian myth', I would say that Sikelianos is

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[39] Matthew 17.5, repeating words spoken at the Baptism by the φωνὴ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, which is accompanied by τὸ Πνεῦμα Θεοῦ καταβαῖνον ὡσεὶ περιστεράν (Matthew 3.16-17). Compare Sikelianos' association of voice and bird in Zeus' 'voice like an owl'.

[40] Matthew 17.2.

[41] This technique is used more extensively and effectively to bring the Islamic Christ of «Ἄγραφον» closer to the Gospels (see pp.235-41).

attempting to transplant Jesus into ancient Greek mythology, and to aestheticize him. These two aims are not entirely distinct, since the beauty which Sikelianos attributes to the Nazarene is the ideal beauty associated with Greek gods and their representations in marble: this, surely, is the import of σὰ θεὸς ὡραῖος (line 2) and τὴν καλλονὴ τὴ θεία του (23).

«(Φανταστικὴ Μυθολογία)» presents Jesus not only as a work of art, but also as an artist (sculptor). As artist, the image of beauty which the Nazarene wants, but fails, to create is clearly an embodiment of himself. His failure may represent the failure of Christianity (in the eyes of the young poet) to match the aesthetic achievements of ancient Greece. The Nazarene's aim is only fulfilled in death through the intervention of Zeus.

In another of the juvenilia, «Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος»,[42] Sikelianos develops the presentation of Christ as a pagan statue. The idea in this case is not as simple as in «(Φανταστικὴ Μυθολογία)»: the transformation seems to work in two directions, with Jesus first entering into a statue created by Praxiteles, and this statue later being born into the world as Jesus.

Referring to a statue on which Praxiteles is working, the poet asks (lines 15-18)

> Μὲς τὸ καθάριο μάρμαρο
> Ποιὸ αἷμα θὰ νὰ τρέξῃ
>
> Καὶ ποιὰ ψυχὴ θὰ ἐνσαρκωθῇ
> Στὸν ἄγνωστο θεό του [. . .] ;

In the statue Praxiteles 'is blending' κάθε τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καλλονή (line 22) and he himself becomes τοῦ ἄγνωστου θεοῦ. / Ποὺ ἀγάλια πλάττει, ὁ λάτρης (lines 27-8). Sikelianos is alluding to the 'unknown god' of Paul's sermon on the Areopagus, a Biblical passage which may

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[42] Tsarlamba-Kaklamani 1989: 96-101.

have appealed to him not only for its Athenian setting, but also for the way in which it locates the Judaeo-Christian God within the context of ancient Greek paganism.[43] Paul is referring to God the Father, but in Sikelianos' poem 'unknown god' refers to Jesus,[44] for while Praxiteles is to fashion the beauty of the god, the god himself 'is soon to mingle' (36-40)

Τὴν καλλονὴ τὴ θεία του
Μ' ἕνα σταυρό . . . Σὺ μόνο
Σκάλιζ' ὡραῖο τὸ ἄγαλμα . . .
'Εκειὸς θὰ βρῇ τὸν πόνο . . .

The antithesis of 'statue' and 'pain' looks forward to the poet's worship of the statue and rejection of Christ's suffering in the later stages of the poem.

The poet now addresses the statue (lines 41-4):

Καὶ τώρα ὁποὺ ὑπέρτερα
Δὲν ἐπλασθῆκαν κάλλη
Διάβα, ὦ ὑπέροχο ἄγαλμα
Στὴν ὕπαρξι τὴν ἄλλη.

The 'other existence' into which the statue is to pass is the earthly life of Christ. The second part of the poem (lines 45-59) offers a bizarre account of the Incarnation and Virgin Birth. 'His body had [already] been created' (45), in the statue of Praxiteles, or more generally by 'the other religion which has gone' (50-51), that is, 'the one, the Greek religion' which 'worshipped the body' (52-3). 'For this reason' the poet tells us, 'she who gave birth to him was a virgin' (46-7). One sees here the basic weakness of the poem. The statue of Praxiteles and the body born of the Virgin will not come into any intelligible relationship. Was there a birth or not?

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[43] Acts 17.22-31, 23. For an authoritative discussion of the relation of Paul's speech to Greek thought see Dibelius 1956: 26-77, and more recently Barr 1993: 28-36.

[44] As it does in Karasoutsas' «Τὸ ἐξωκκλήσιον τῆς 'Αττικῆς» (1860) (Politis n.d.: 140-44).

Presumably not, if the statue in which Greek religion 'incarnated the god' (57) already existed. Later Sikelianos seems to draw a distinction between the 'marble Christ' which he acknowledges as God, and the body of the Infant Jesus. In Part 4, the theological orthodoxy which sees in the manger ἐνσαρκωμένο τὸ θεό is characterized as 'the deceit of the mind' (66-9).

The central conceit of this poem turns on the ambiguity of the verb ἐνσαρκώνω and the cognate noun ἐνσάρκωσις. Regularly used of the sculptor's embodiment of a person, god or idea in a statue, they are also (with or without the prefix) the theological terms in which the Johannine doctrine of Incarnation (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο) was worked out.[45] Sikelianos seems to deny the Nicene Creed, which speaks of Christ, Θεὸν ἀληθινόν, as σαρκωθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς Παρθένου. He denies the theological meaning of ἐνσάρκωσις in its proper context (τοῦ νοῦ ἡ ἀπάτη), and seems to endow its sculptural use with theological significance, though he does not work this through. He speaks of Praxiteles, or his chisel, as creating the 'unknown god' (lines 18-19, 27-8), but he asks what blood will run in the marble and what soul will be incarnated in it. The first question is answered in the last line of the poem (see below), but it is not clear whether the answer to the second is the god who 'will find the pain', for Sikelianos' presentation of the Crucifixion suggests that the Christ who suffered and died had misunderstood his own nature. The underlying idea seems to be that Christianity appropriated and distorted an idea which originates in Greek religion; and Sikelianos sets out to reverse the process and reclaim Christ as a pagan God, as later he aspires to restore him to Helicon.

In Part 5 Sikelianos presents his alternative to the 'deceit' of the 'incarnate god' of the manger, his Χριστὸς μαρμάρινος / Κατάλευκος καὶ ὡραῖος (lines 74-5). This 'marble Christ' is an Apollonian figure

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[45] On this see further p.304 in connection with Elytis' use of the verb σαρκῶμαι.

passing in unopposed triumph through the world. In describing his passage Sikelianos appropriates and distorts passages from the Gospels. He exploits the NT idea of the 'kingdom of heaven' (lines 78-9, 94-5):

Ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν
Τοῦ ἀνοίγεται στὴ γῆ μας·
. . . . . .
Κ' ἔστησε τὸ βασίλειο του
Μὲς τὴν καρδιά τοῦ κόσμου . . .

This seems to be in deliberate contention with Christ's assertion to Pilate,

ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου.[46]

To accommodate Christ to the 'Greek religion' which 'worshipped the body', it is essential that his kingdom should be 'of this world', that he should belong here, like the ancient gods dwelling on Olympus.

Between the two references to the 'kingdom' is a passage obviously alluding to Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.[47] Details drawn from the Entry are blended with the blessing of children from a quite separate Gospel incident.[48] In the Gospels the Entry, with crowds strewing branches before Christ and crying Hosanna, is a prelude to the Passion. In Sikelianos, though, there is no specific narrative context, those who strew branches are not a specific group of people but 'everyone', and it is implied that this happens wherever Christ goes (lines 82-3):

Διαβαίνει καὶ στὰ πόδια του
Κλαριὰ τοῦ στρώνουν ὅλοι.

The details from the Gospel are appropriated to the 'marble Christ'

[46] John 18.36.
[47] Compare lines 82-3 and 90-93 with Matthew 21.8-9.
[48] Compare lines 86-8 with Mark 10.13-16.

to suggest that he met with universal acclaim and that his passage through the world was unopposed. This is in conflict with the Gospels, where Christ had many enemies and the crowd who cried Hosanna may have been the same that some days later called for his execution. A more direct confrontation with the Gospels follows, in a passage which exploits the episode of Doubting Thomas and sharply distinguishes Sikelianos' Apollonian Christ (λάμπει ἡ χαρὰ στὸ μέτωπο / Τοῦ ἀγάλματος, lines 96-7) from the Crucified Jesus of the Gospels (lines 104-13):

> Σὲ βλέπω, καὶ σὰν τὸν Θωμᾶ
> Πιστεύω, Εἶσαι ὁ θεός μου !
>
> Μὰ δὲν θὰ πίστευα ποτὲ
> Μπρὸς στῶν καρφιῶν τὸν τύπο !
> Θά 'νοιωθα κάτι ἀνθρώπινο
> Θά 'νοιωθα ἕνανε χτύπο.
>
> Κι ἂν στὸ σταυρὸ θά 'σουν θεὸς
> Γιὰ ὅλους τοὺς ἄλλους, μόνος
> Θά 'λεγα ἐγώ: «Εἶν' ἄνθρωπος ! . . .
> Τὸν σφράγισεν ὁ πόνος ! . . . »

Σέ in Σὲ βλέπω denotes the Χριστὸς μαρμάρινος of the previous passage. Thus the poet appropriates Thomas' cry of belief, ὁ Κύριος καὶ ὁ Θεός μου, but separates it from 'the mark of the nails' which provoked it. For the poet, the wounds of the Crucifixion have a diametrically opposite significance: they are the proof that Jesus was not God.

It is a curious coincidence (there is no possibility of influence in either direction) that both Sikelianos and (much later) Palamas used the same elements of the story of Doubting Thomas in poems in which Christ functions primarily as the embodiment of ideal beauty. While Palamas agonizes over his unbelief, which extends beyond the Crucified Redeemer to the very concepts of divinity and transcendental beauty, Sikelianos'

expression of unbelief is confident and emphatic but restricted to the idea of a suffering God. This protestation of unbelief δὲν θὰ πίστευα ποτὲ / Μπρὸς στῶν καρφιῶν τὸν τύπο, engages very closely with what Thomas said when the other disciples told him that Jesus had appeared to them:

> εἰ μὴ ἴδω [. . .] τὸν τύπον τῶν ἥλων [. . .] οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω.[49]

Furthermore, the refusal to acknowledge Jesus on the Cross as God, expressed as a conditional sentence with ὅλους τοὺς ἄλλους in the protasis and ἐγώ in the apodosis, is surely a deliberate echo of the form, and a radical inversion of the meaning, of Peter's declaration of loyalty on the way to Gethsemane:

> εἰ πάντες σκανδαλισθήσονται ἐν σοί, ἐγὼ δὲ οὐδέποτε σκανδαλισθήσομαι.[50]

This exploitation of the language of Thomas and Peter makes more dramatic (and from a Christian perspective more offensive) the poet's rejection of one of the central doctrines of Christianity, that in Christ God suffered and died on the Cross.

But this is not Sikelianos' last word about the Cross in «Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος». The last two parts of the poem present a very curious account of the Crucifixion, addressed to Christ and blending imaginative realism with evocations of Orthodox ritual. There is the histrionic mourning of Martha, 'mad with grief [. . .] her neck scratched, her breasts bare' (lines 115-16), but also the unlikely detail of incense burning at the foot of the Cross (line 114)— and Martha periodically throws more incense on the fire (121)— suggesting the interior of a church rather than

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[49] John 20.25. Compare Palamas' use of this text (pp.118-20).

[50] Matthew 26.33.

Golgotha, a crucifix rather than the Crucifixion.[51]

The idea expressed in «(Φανταστικὴ Μυθολογία)», that at his death Jesus became a statue, is repeated here, without the intervention of Zeus. In the context of the Crucifixion the idea makes more sense, since the death itself is not unexplained and is distinct from the transformation.[52] Indeed, one can see that the conceit has a basis in the immobility of the body after death: Κ' ἔμεινες μόνον ἄγαλμα, κ' ἔμεινες μόνο σῶμα (line 120). But Sikelianos is not content with this, and makes the rather absurd claim, still addressed to Jesus, that he had wanted to be a pagan god (θεὸς στὴν εἰδωλολατρεία, line 127), and that he is afraid 'lest the soul should not attain the beauty of the body and that worship in marble which the whole world owns' (128-30). Perhaps Sikelianos has in mind Christ's cry of desolation on the Cross, but he has transformed it out of all recognition. The Jesus of the poem did not fail in his 'great aim' (128), for when τὸ πνεῦμα [του] δέχτηκε ἄλλος θόλος,[53] he 'brought back the ancient marble religion' (131-2), and, finally (133-5),

> ὅταν Ρωμαίου φύλακος ἡ λόγχη, ὠιμέ, ἡ ἀγρία
> Σ' ἐπλήγωσεν, ἀπ' τὴν πληγὴ — δὲν εἶνε τοῦτο ψέμμα —
> Ἐβγῆκε ἰχώρ, τῶν παλαιῶν θεῶν ἐβγῆκε τὸ αἷμα.

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[51] The choice of Martha as the mourner at the Cross is in defiance of the Gospels. She is not among the women named by John (19.25) as 'standing by the cross', nor among those named by Matthew (27.55) and Mark (15.40) as 'looking on from afar'. Many such changes of detail are found in later poems, particularly in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*. Not all are attributable to faulty recollection of source texts, and they are indicative of the freedom with which Sikelianos adapts Christian texts.

[52] Christ as statue is also more cogent in this context because of the importance of the Crucifixion as a sculptural subject, expecially in the West.

[53] An allusion to John's characterization (19.30) of the moment of Christ's death: παρέδωκε τὸ πνεῦμα (this follows his last word τετέλεσται quoted by Sikelianos); or to Luke's version (23.46) of Christ's last words: πάτερ, εἰς χεῖράς σου παρατίθεμαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου. The ἄλλος θόλος which, according to Sikelianos, receives Christ's 'spirit' seems like a studied avoidance of the specifics of Christian theology.

This is, on the face of it, inconsistent with the earlier vehement refusal to acknowledge the crucified Jesus as God. The two views may, however, be reconciled, in that, for Sikelianos, it is only in the moment of death that Jesus becomes divine; but even so, he does not become God in the Christian sense (the Second Person of the Trinity), but becomes instead a member of the ancient pantheon, one of the gods in whose veins flowed ichor, and not the human blood so central to the Christian doctrine of Redemption. Paradoxically, this poetic paganization of Jesus is achieved through a distortion of John's Gospel:

> εἷς τῶν στρατιωτῶν λόγχῃ αὐτοῦ τὴν πλευρὰν ἔνυξε, καὶ εὐθέως ἐξῆλθεν αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ.

Even Sikelianos' emphatic assertion δὲν εἶνε τοῦτο ψέμμα was prompted by John, who adds the following testimonial to the sentence just quoted:

> καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκε, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστιν ἡ μαρτυρία, κἀκεῖνος οἶδεν ὅτι ἀληθῆ λέγει, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύσητε.[54]

Sikelianos' attachment of a truth assertion to his radical and paganizing reinterpretation of the physical phenomenon reported by John is an almost casually insolent appropriation. Sikelianos implies that he is at last providing the true interpretation of what was thought to be water and blood: his truth outdoes the truth of the Gospel.

In both «(Φάνταστικὴ Μυθολογία)» and «Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος» Jesus becomes, at the moment of death, one with the ancient

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[54] John 19.34-5. John goes on to explain ἐγένετο γὰρ ταῦτα, ἵνα ἡ γραφὴ πληρωθῇ (19.36). Sikelianos' assertion to Christ that at the moment of his death ἐπλέρωνες τὸ φόρο σου στὴ σμίλη τοῦ Φειδία (line 123) is probably a deliberate use of the same verb (though with a different meaning), subverting John again by relating Christ's death to the ancient Greek instead of the Jewish tradition, and to an aesthetic rather than a religious (Messianic) context.

gods, through a kind of adoption by Zeus in the former, and through the ichor flowing from his side in the latter. The (admittedly limited) poetic effectiveness of the image of the dead marble Christ is in large part due to its association with language and incidents from the Gospels, without which the Χριστὸς μαρμάρινος would be little more than the appropriation of a name. In «Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος» there is some attempt to work out the contradiction between the Gospels and the beautiful pagan god of Sikelianos' imagination, but it is hardly successful.

We see in these early poems the first intimation of the synthesis of Christian and pagan themes which characterizes much of Sikelianos' later work. More than this, the idea of an artist who wishes to embody himself in a work of art is suggestive of the main outline of Sikelianos' poetic project which makes the poetic ego the principal subject of many poems and mythologizes the poet's own experience. The idea of Jesus as artist prepares the way for later poems of Sikelianos in which the poet seems to take on the role of Christ,[55] and the transformation of his body into a work of art foreshadows the way in which Sikelianos later uses Holy Communion (the body and blood of Christ) as a metaphor for his own poetic creation offered to others (see §3.7).[56] As an artist, the way was open for Sikelianos to succeed, like Zeus, where the Nazarene of «(Φανταστικὴ Μυθολογία)» failed, and, raising the 'myth of Jesus' to Helicon, to produce an idealized image of Jesus worthy of Pheidias. This ambition, implicit in «(Φανταστικὴ Μυθολογία)», explicit in «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο», remained unfulfilled in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, and was

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[55] And in this anticipates Elytis (see §§4.4 and 4.6)

[56] The first intimation of this is in another of the juvenilia, «Ἡ Μεταλαβή» (Tsarlamba-Kaklamani 1989: 79-80). The title is a dialect form of Μετάληψις, but the poem is concerned with Zeus, not Christ, and it is the poet who wants to give Communion to the dying god (lines 4, 27-8): Ἀπόψε, ἀπόψε ὁ Δίας θὰ νὰ πεθάνῃ ! [. . .] ˆ Ω ! πᾶμε, στὸ στερνό του ψυχορράγημα / Νὰ τόνε μεταλάβω ἀπ' τὸν κρατῆρα.

fulfilled, if at all, in the πλέρια εἰκόνα which, in «Ἀντρίκειο Βάφτισμα» and «Διόνυσος–Ἰησούς», is an image of a composite pagan-Christian god and in «Το Κατορθωμένο Σῶμα» an image 'of myself'.[57]

The central conceit of the juvenilia leads nowhere, since Christ only fulfils his pagan destiny in the moment of death when he is transformed into the Attic perfection of marble. These poems offer only the image of a static finished perfection. In Sikelianos' mature poetry there is a more dynamic and more effectively paganized image of Christ, but, involving as it does the fusion of Christ with Dionysus, it is as remote from the Gospels as the early 'marble Christ'. Only in the latter parts of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* and in «Ἄγραφον» does Sikelianos show any real interest in the earthly life or humanity of the Christ of the Gospels. Before discussing the presence of Christ in the mature poetry, I turn to those poems of the middle period in which the Panagia rather than Christ becomes the main focus of Sikelianos' interest in Christianity. In two of those poems, however— in «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου» and *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*— the poet's appropriation of the role of Christ plays a significant part.[58]

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[57] See pp.246, 251-3, 305.

[58] See pp.168-74, 189-96.

3.3 The Panagia in *Πρόλογος στὴ Ζωή*

The 'Αθηνιώτισσα to whom the emperor of Palamas' *Φλογέρα* speaks is clearly the Panagia of Christian tradition. The emperor's Christian devotion to the Panagia is a fundamental presupposition of that poem; and though the emperor is standing in what was once the Parthenon, it is now a Christian church. Furthermore, as I have shown, the Panagia is not identified with Athena, whom she has displaced, or with any other pagan goddess. The use of elements from Byzantine hymns in the emperor's speech is entirely in conformity with the narrative context, and it is only in the distortion, and not in the attribution, of the appropriated texts that Palamas' poetry is seen to be theologically deviant. In those poems of Sikelianos prior to *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* which allude to the Panagia, the situation is more complex. To begin with, the poet interposes no third-person narrative between himself and the female figures who are the objects of his quasi-liturgical devotions; and so pervasive is Sikelianos' syncretism that we can rarely point to a passage and say here the poet is referring to, or addressing, the Panagia and her alone. Usually we find composite figures, combining pagan and Christian elements, the products of Sikelianos' imagination rather than established and recognizable figures from one or other tradition.[59] The mother figures of the third and fourth of the five *Συνειδήσεις* which make up *Πρόλογος στὴ Ζωή* (discussed in this section) and *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* (discussed in §3.4) are syncretistic constructs for the most part, uniting the Panagia with figures of ancient Greek mythology or with more universal personifications such as Mother Nature and Mother Earth.

As Vogiatzoglou points out, 'the Virgin Mary appears for the first

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[59] «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ 'Ανθρώπου», discussed at length below (pp.164-75), is the chief exception.

time in the poems of the Balkan Wars but only as a distant patriotic symbol'.[60] And in «Δέσποινα Ὑπομονή», from *Ἡ Συνείδηση τῆς Γυναίκας*, many liturgical expressions associated with the Virgin are applied to a figure who is essentially the idealized Greek wife and mother, bound by tradition like the bride of the preceding poem in the sequence, «Ὁ Χωριάτικος Γάμος». It is in *Ἡ Συνείδηση τῆς Πίστης* that one sees Sikelianos' first concerted attempts to rewrite the 'myths' of Christianity. The 'Faith' of the fourth *Συνείδηση* is not simply Christian Orthodox Faith— the first three poems are concerned with pagan religion— but some more diffuse religious state of mind in which paganism and Orthodoxy are fused. This syncretistic aspect of Sikelianos' 'Faith' finds expression in the identification of Christ and the Panagia with ancient gods and goddesses. Apart from the two poems related to the Panagia («Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου» and «Δεκάτη Μούσα»), *Ἡ Συνείδηση τῆς Πίστης* also contains two poems in which Christ figures prominently, «Ἀντρίκειο Βάφτισμα» and «Διόνυσος–Ἰησοῦς», which are both discussed in §3.7.

Here I shall concentrate on «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου», partly because this is not analysed by Vogiatzoglou in the same detail as «Δέσποινα Ὑπομονή» and «Δεκάτη Μούσα», but chiefly because it is more extensively involved with Christian language.

Vogiatzoglou sees «Δέσποινα Ὑπομονή»[61] as 'a representative

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60 Vogiatzoglou 1993: 231. She is referring to the poems of *Ἐπίνικοι Α΄*, and in particular to «Παρηγορήτισσα» (1913) (Sikelianos 1965-69: II, 28-9), addressed to the Panagia, who is mainly presented in the restricted military role of the tradition of Christian nationalism associated with the Ὑπέρμαχος Στρατηγός (see pp.84-5 above). In another of these poems, «Ὁ Ὅρκος τῶν Κοινοτήτων στὴ Μάνα Ἑλλάδα» (published 1930, but presumably written at the time of the Balkan Wars) (Sikelianos 1965-69: II, 56-7), the Virgin, addressed in stanza 1 as Ἐσύ, στὴ γῆ ἐπάνω ἡ Πλατυτέρα, [...] τῶν ἐθνῶν ἡ θεία Μητέρα is quite clearly identified with the Μάνα Ἑλλάδα of the title and stanza 2, in the manner of Valaoritis (see p.10 n.7 above).

61 Sikelianos 1965-69: III, 144-51.

example of both a discernable [sic] and an implied dialogue with Byzantine [liturgical] texts'.[62] Most of the expressions identified by Vogiatzoglou as 'quite clearly echo[ing] phrases of ecclesiastical poetry' are found among the titles, adjectives and metaphors used in the periodic exclamatory invocations of Δέσποινα Ὑπομονή.[63] The repeated return to the vocative, often in syntactically detached exclamations, is a technique used again in «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου» (and many other poems), and mirrors, on a smaller scale, the punctuation of the emperor's speech in Palamas' *Φλογέρα* by acclamations addressed directly to the Virgin and based on extracts from Byzantine hymnography (§2.4).

Δέσποινα Ὑπομονή is not primarily the Panagia. She is 'Woman' (addressed as such in line 167), an idealized image of Greek womanhood bounded by the traditional structures of Greek village life; and the poem follows her progress from betrothal (line 95) to widowhood (lines 142ff). The association, through the use of liturgical images, of 'Woman' with the Panagia works in two directions: it serves to direct the reader's attention to the humanity of the Panagia (which Sikelianos develops extensively in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*), and, more importantly here, it serves to make of the virtuous, patient, industrious Greek wife and mother an object of worship. But this 'Woman' is also compared with Athena Nike (line 90) and addressed as ὦ Ἀμαζόνα (line 118), and Vogiatzoglou therefore

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[62] Vogiatzoglou 1993: 237.

[63] Vogiatzoglou 1993: 237-242. To those identified by Vogiatzoglou I would add Ὦ λάμψη βέβαιη (line 50): compare φωτισμὸς ἡμῶν καὶ βεβαίωσις (Akathistos Canon, Ode 9, *troparion* 2); Ὦ σκιά (line 108): compare χαῖρε, ξύλον ἐσκιόουλλον (Akathistos Hymn, *oikos* 13); Ὦ κορμανάβαση / τῆς πλέριας παρθενιᾶς (lines 168-9): compare ἡ στήλη τῆς παρθενίας (*ibid. oikos* 19); and Ὦ μάνταλο χρυσὸ τῆς μοναξιᾶς (line 172): compare χαῖρε παραδείσου θυρῶν ἀνοικτήριον (*ibid. oikos* 7). And rather than relate περίστυλο in the phrase περίστυλο τοῦ ἀντρίκειου στοχασμοῦ (line 171) to πύρινε στῦλε in the Akasthistos Hymn (*oikos* 11) as Vogiatzoglou does (1993: 238), I would relate the whole phrase to αὐλὴ λογικῶν προβάτων in *oikos* 7.

speaks of the 'indirect syncretism' of the poem:[64] indirect because both Christian and pagan figures are associated with Δέσποινα Ὑπομονή, who is not definitively identified with either tradition, but is a poetic construct in which both inhere.

The Tenth Muse of «Δεκάτη Μούσα»[65] is less obviously connected with the Panagia.[66] She is addressed as σιωπή (lines 1-25) and as Καλοσύνη (lines142-83), both qualities appropriate to the Panagia if not explicitly associated with her in liturgical texts.

When Sikelianos describes the Muse as ἅγιος πύργος / μοναχή, he is probably alluding to the ἀσάλευτος πύργος τῆς ἐκκλησίας of the Akathistos Hymn (*oikos* 23). Xydis, on the other hand, indicates the pagan associations of some of the images.[67] In fact, the Tenth Muse is the least culturally encumbered of Sikelianos' images of the ideal feminine: a benevolent and nourishing presence animating nature, 'the deep breathing of the world' which the poet sensed already as a child (lines 71-5), the object of his longing from the time he suckled as an infant to the first fulfilment of sexual desire (lines 117-31). The Panagia is clearly not the starting point (as she is in «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ 'Ανθρώπου» or *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*), but is only tangentially associated with the image of the feminine in the poem.[68]

«Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ 'Ανθρώπου»[69] contains (from line 51 to the end) Sikelianos' most sustained piece of hymn-like writing rooted in the

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[64] Vogiatzoglou 1993: 236 n.4.

[65] Sikelianos 1965-69: III, 215-22.

[66] The idea of the Panagia as Tenth Muse was probably developed in conversations with Kazantzakis during their visit to Athos. In a fictionalized account of the visit, Kazantzakis (1971: 63) uses this name for the Panagia.

[67] Xydis 1973: 95.

[68] In *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* the Panagia is more clearly present, but still identified with nature: and in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* Sikelianos strives to relocate the Virgin of the ecclesiastical narratives in the world of nature.

[69] Sikelianos 1965-69: III, 193-202.

Christian rather than the classical tradition, and it is addressed explicitly and, it may be said, exclusively, to the Panagia. It is a celebration of the Panagia and remains almost constantly focused on her, or the poet's relationship to her. And it anticipates many details in both *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* and those parts of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* which are devoted to the Panagia.[70] Nevertheless, the influence of Byzantine hymnography is less evident in «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου» than in «Δέσποινα Ὑπομνή»:[71] the former is more closely related to the Gospels and apocryphal texts than to hymnography, as the title might lead one to expect. 'Son of Man' is an expression of OT origin frequently used by Jesus in all four Gospels in reference to himself. There is an element of paradox in Sikelianos' addition of 'Mother', and in the text the resulting expression is shortened to Μάνα τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου (line 73). The title, particularly in this shortened form, presents a clear antithesis to the later title 'Mother of God', stressing humanity rather than divinity.

The poem's clear focus on the Panagia is shown in passages referring to the Annunciation (lines 83-9), the Christ Child (Βρέφος) in her arms and the Δωδεκάχρονο Παιδί (112-131), the adult Christ (132-47) and the Dormition (Κοίμηση) and Assumption (148-182).[72] The poem is not, however, without syncretistic touches, though they occur in comparisons: the poet comes to the Panagia as Achilles to Thetis (lines 52-3); and he

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[70] See Xydis 1973: 104.

[71] One obvious allusion is the exclamation Ὦ Στάμνα (line 158) derived from the Akathistos Canon (Xydis 1973: 107). In addition, when the poet says (lines 76-9) Σὲ ξέρω ὡς [. . .] ἡ τρεχαντήρα τὸ λιμάνι, / σὰν τὴν ὥρα ποὺ ὁ θαλασσινὸς φωνάζει / «κόψτε τὰ σκοινιά ! », he appears to be indebted to the nautical imagery of the Akathistos Hymn: Χαῖρε, ὁλκὰς τῶν θελόντων σωθῆναι· χαῖρε λιμὴν τῶν τοῦ βίου πλωτήρων (*oikos* 17); and Akathistos Canon: λιμὴν ἡμῖν γενοῦ θαλαττεύουσι (Ode 6, *troparion* 3).

[72] The way in which a substantial part of this poem follows the chronology of the lives of the Virgin and Christ anticipates *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, where chronological structuring on the same basis is attempted on a much larger scale.

draws a contrast between the Panagia and Daphne. The latter occurs in the account of the Annunciation, a passage remarkable for its eroticism (lines 84-91):

ὡσὰν ἡ Δάφνη, Ἐσὺ δὲν ἔφυγες
τὸν ἔρωτα τοῦ Θεοῦ,
νὰ σώσεις σὲ βουνὸ τὴν παρθενία,

ἀλλ' ὅταν μὲ τὸ γόνα σπρώχνοντας
ὁ Ἀρχάγγελος, ὡσὰ Βοριάς,
Σοῦ ὀρτάνοιξε τὴ θύρα τοῦ σπιτιοῦ

κ' ἡ μυρωδιὰ τοῦ κρίνου
κάρφωσε τὸν ἀέρα του μεμιᾶς.

The suggestion of syncretism extends to the Archangel, who comes ὡσὰ Βοριάς: not only as a force of nature (the north wind) but also as the personification of the north wind, Boreas, son of a Titan and object of an Athenian state cult.

The surprising implication that the Panagia did not 'save her virginity' is reinforced by the potential sexual metaphors of the Archangel 'pushing with his knee' to 'open the door of her house'. In liturgical texts the Virgin herself is often described as a 'door' and as a 'dwelling place'.[73] Awareness of this heightens the provocative unorthodoxy of Sikelianos' language.

Clearly this account of the Annunciation has only the slenderest connections with Christian sources, elaborating Luke's bare statement of the angel's entry: εἰσελθὼν ὁ ἄγγελος πρὸς αὐτήν.[74] Though 'afraid'

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[73] In the Akathistos Hymn, for example, the Virgin is σεπτοῦ μυστηρίου θύρα and οἴκημα πανάριστον τοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν Σεραφείμ (*oikos* 15).

[74] Luke 1.28. Perhaps Sikelianos was aware of the OT use of this same phrase as a euphemism for sexual intercourse, as in Jacob's wedding nights with first Leah and then Rachel: εἰσῆλθε πρὸς αὐτὴν / Ῥαχήλ (Genesis 29.23, 30).

(τρεμάμενη), as she is in Luke 1.29-30, the Panagia of this poem is not at all bashful: Sikelianos suggests the erotic appeal of her eyes (lines 92-3):

δὲν ἔνεψες τὸ μέγα μάτι
οὐδὲ τὴ δόξα τοῦ φρυδιοῦ.

And yet he concludes this daring vignette of the Annunciation with a verbatim quotation of Mary's words of submission in Luke (lines 97-9):

εἶπες :

«Ἰδοὺ ἡ δούλη Κυρίου·
γένοιτό μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμα σου ! »[75]

Appropriated by Sikelianos, these words become a gesture of sexual submission. They are, however, curiously inapposite, since Sikelianos' Archangel has not spoken. Κυρίου too may seem inappropriate: it cannot easily be related to Θεοῦ of line 85, since this refers, at least in part, to Apollo pursuing Daphne ('You did not, like Daphne, flee the love of God'). There is no suggestion of any God distinct from the Archangel whose ἔρωτας the Panagia might have wished to, but did not, flee.

If we take the reference to the north wind in conjunction with the comparison between the Panagia confronted by the Archangel and a spring day overshadowed by a cloud (line 95),

ὡσὰν πρωτομαγιὰ ποὺ τὴ σκεπάσει σύγνεφο,

we can observe a highly imaginative subversion of the Gospel. Through the clear implication of a sexual encounter Sikelianos makes the Archangel into the physical agent of conception. In Luke, Gabriel explains to Mary, who 'know[s] not a man' that the agent of conception will be the 'Holy Spirit',

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[75] Luke 1.38.

which in a parallelism typical of Hebrew poetry is equated with the 'power of the Most High' which will 'overshadow' her:

> Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι.[76]

The Archangel who comes like the north wind and overshadows the Virgin like a cloud has taken on the role of Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα means 'wind' and 'breath' as well as 'spirit'); he has, in effect, become the God to whose ἔρωτας the Virgin submits; and Θεός, Ἀρχάγγελος and Κύριος appear to denote a single persona. Sikelianos has transformed the Annunciation into the type of sexual encounter between a mortal and a god common in the Greek myths;[77] and he suggests that the Panagia was superior to Daphne in that she did not flee but submitted to her divine lover and was impregnated. This approach to the Annunciation obviously implies a rejection of the theological doctrine of the Virgin Birth, which is closely associated with belief in the divinity of Jesus and is the foundation of Orthodox devotion to the Panagia.

After the Annunciation the reader might expect the poet to turn to the Nativity and the infant Jesus, as indeed he does, but not immediately. First he speaks of his own childhood and development (lines 100-104):

> Ὦ Μάνα·
> ἀλήθεια,
> μ' ὅλους τοὺς ἀνέμους ἔπαιξα,
> καθένα χωριστὰ κι ὅλους μαζί.
> στὴ πλάση μεγαλώνοντας ὀρτός.

He then speaks of his growing up as a cypress reaching a towering height, and of himself as laden as with cones, with τῆς Ὀρθότης τὸν καρπό

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[76] Luke 1.35.

[77] The idea is developed further in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, with a much clearer syncretistic element (see pp.211-20).

(lines 105-09). Given that this passage follows an Annunciation scene which concludes with a quotation from Luke, it seems more than likely that Sikelianos intends a subtle allusion to Luke's two statements about the Christ-child's development in which he refers to growth in 'wisdom':

> Τὸ δὲ παιδίον ηὔξανε καὶ ἐκραταιοῦτο πνεύματι πληρούμενον σοφίας, καὶ χάρις Θεοῦ ἦν ἐπ' αὐτό. [. . .] Ἰησοῦς προέκοπτε σοφίᾳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ καὶ χάριτι παρὰ Θεῷ καὶ ἀνθρώποις.[78]

While Sikelianos' lines may not be very close verbally to these two statements, they do reflect their spirit;[79] and, even without the poet's implicit appropriation of Luke's description of the growing Christ-child, to move from the Annunciation to the poet's childhood is to substitute the poet for Christ.

The two Lucan statements of development occur immediately before and after the account of the finding of the twelve-year-old Christ among the teachers in the temple, to which Sikelianos now refers (lines 105, 110-18):

> Ἄλλ' ὅταν ἔγινε τὸ κυπαρίσσι πύργος
> . . . . . .
> ὦ Μάνα,
> ἤμουν μπροστά Σου πιά!
>
> Ὤ, καὶ μ' Ἐσένα
> ἐγνώρισα τὸν Ἄνθρωπο,
> τὸ Βρέφος

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[78] Luke 2.40, 52.

[79] Sikelianos' μεγαλώνοντας reflects Luke's ηὔξανε, and στὴν πλάση could be seen as a typical Sikelianic generalization, avoiding the more theologically rooted 'in favour with God and man'. Growing 'strong in spirit' may be reflected (continuing the play on 'wind' and 'spirit') in the ἅγιο σεῖσμα of the cypress tree (caused, presumably, by the wind), or, more distantly, in the child playing with 'all the winds'.

π' ἀκουμπάει τὸ μάγουλο στὸ μάγουλό Σου
καὶ κοιτάει τὴν ἄβυσσο στὰ μάτια Σου. στηλά.

τοῦ Δωδεκάχρονου Παιδιοῦ
τὸ ζύγιασμα τῆς ζήσης τὸ λαμπρό.

The introduction of Christ here might seem to weigh against the suggestion that the poet has usurped the place of Christ, but different levels of reality are involved. The poet implicitly presents himself as the offspring of the mating of the Panagia and an Archangel who is typologically a pagan god;[80] and then, still within the account of his own development relates that he encountered, in his maturity, what are essentially iconographic images of the Panagia and Christ, and finally, as we shall see, transforms the image of Christ into the image of the poet.

Sikelianos is referring to two icon types, the Γλυκοφιλοῦσα and the Δωδεκαετής which he noted repeatedly in his Athos journal,[81] and the idea of being before the Panagia 'at last' can be understood as a reference to his visit to Athos. However, his description of the Δωδεκαετής is not one which would find wide acceptance among pious Christians. It stresses the physical beauty (τὰ κάλλη του, line 119) and the erotic appeal of the boy Jesus. There are sensuous metaphors (lines 123-5) for his breast and neck and even his armpit (κρυμμένο μύρο ἡ ἀμασχάλη); desire is associated with his eyes (126-8); and 'the smile of perfect Love' [or 'Eros': τοῦ ἀκέριου Ἔρωτα] lights his lips' (129-30). In the ambiguity of Ἔρωτας there is another hint at the wider pagan context.

From the boy Sikelianos moves on to 'the man' (lines 132-3):

Ὦ, καὶ τὸν ἄντρα

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[80] A conceit encouraged, perhaps, by Sikelianos' baptismal name, Angelos.

[81] Konstantoulaki-Hantzou 1988: 103, 107-9, 132, 152, 177, 180, 216, 222. It was on Athos that Sikelianos first drafted «Ὁ Δωδεκαετής», later included in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* (*ibid.* 138).

ποὺ τὸν κρύβει ἀκόμα ἡ δύναμή του.

The accusative here indicates that τὸν ἄντρα is still governed by ἐγνώρισα and forms part of a sequence: ἐγνώρισα τὸν Ἄνθρωπο, τὸ Βρέφος [. . .] καὶ τὸν ἄντρα. But since ἄντρα lacks an initial capital, it does not immediately declare its connection with Christ.

The similes which describe the man still hidden by his power— the harvester beneath the leaves of the vine arbour, the thresher bent over in a 'sea of wheat', the fishermen alone in the sea (lines 134-7)— could all be seen as echoes of Christian imagery, but their Christian significance does not really come into focus. The final, broader image of concealment, σὰν ἄστρο σκεπασμένο ἀπὸ τὸ φῶς τοῦ ἡλιοῦ (line 138), is a different matter. Though based on a natural phenomenon (the invisibility of stars in the daytime), it can also be seen as a reversal of an image from the Akathistos Hymn: ἀστὴρ ἐμφαίνων τὸν Ἥλιον (*oikos* 1). In this image Christ is the Sun and the star Mary, but elsewhere in the Akathistos Hymn Christ is the star, for Mary is the ἀστέρος ἀδύτου Μήτηρ (*oikos* 9). Sikelianos' 'man', who is at first 'like a star', becomes a 'separate sun' when he stands upright and absorbs 'pure power' (from the sun?) (lines 139-47):

Π' ἄσφαλτος ὀρθωνόνταν μὲς στὴ δόξα του
ὁ μαγνήτης τοῦ κορμιοῦ του
καὶ ρουφοῦσε δύναμη καθάρια,
ὥσπ' ὅλος,
χώριος ἥλιος,
ἐξεχείλιζε τὴ Χάρη
κι ἀναρρύθμιζε τὴν Πλάση, ποὺ νεκρὴ ἦταν,
φεγγοβόλα,
ἀναστημένη στὸ θεϊκὸ τοῦ Λόγου του χορό!

The association of three theological terms, δόξα, Χάρη and Λόγος

suggests that this passage is a transmutation of the Johannine statement of the Incarnation:

> Καὶ ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.[82]

Sikelianos' Christ figure is not merely 'full of grace', but overflowing with it. For John 'glory' is associated with being made flesh, while Sikelianos speaks of the glory of 'his body'.[83] In the idea of the 'magnet of his body' which 'was standing upright' there is an echo of another Johannine saying: κἀγὼ ἐὰν ὑψωθῶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς, πάντας ἑλκύσω πρὸς ἐμαυτόν.[84]

Sikelianos speaks of 'Creation, which was dead, resurrected' and this has no immediate connection with the Johannine passages cited. However, one of Paul's attempts to explain the 'resurrection of the dead' brings together 'star', 'sun', 'glory', 'power' and 'body', a passage which must have played a part in the generation of these lines of Sikelianos. Paul is speaking of earthly and heavenly bodies and of different kinds of glory:

> ἄλλη δόξα ἡλίου [..] καὶ ἄλλη δόξα ἀστέρων· ἀστὴρ γὰρ ἀστέρος διαφέρει ἐν δόξῃ. οὕτω καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν, σπείρεται [..] ἐν ἀτιμίᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δόξῃ· σπείρεται ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δυνάμει· σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν.[85]

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[82] John 1.14.

[83] Paul also associates 'glory' more directly with Christ's 'body': 'our body' is to become σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ (Philippians 3.21). See p.193.

[84] John 12.32.

[85] I Corinthians 15.41-4. It is clear from *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* that Sikelianos was familiar with a number of Pauline passages on the general resurrection (see pp.191-4). This particular one follows what is probably the origin of the Johannine saying 'unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit' (John 12.24; compare I Corinthians 15.36-7), which Ekdawi (1991: 63) describes as a 'much loved and much quoted text of [Sikelianos']'. See also p.191 n.128 below.

The effect of Sikelianos' construction of the lines in question almost entirely out of terms which are found in close association in two important and well known NT texts is not simply to establish the presence of Christ in the poem (though it certainly does that), for Sikelianos also uses two words with no NT basis which subvert the apparent significance, suggesting that all this language which properly belongs to the Johannine doctrine of the Incarnation, or the Pauline doctrine of the general resurrection at the Second Coming, has been appropriated by the poet himself to describe his own creative power. The verb ἀναρρύθμιζε not only signifies the re-ordering, and thus re-animating, of Creation, but also, and perhaps more immediately, suggests the instilling of rhythm into poetic creation. And this is confirmed in the idea of Creation being 'resurrected in the divine χορός of the Logos', where Sikelianos surely had in mind the 'chorus' of ancient drama.

Sikelianos frequently (in Ekdawi's words) 'associates his poetic λόγος with the Word of God, thereby endowing it with divine authority and truth';[86] and here he does it with rather more subtlety than elsewhere, building up a structure of images and ideas which point to Christ, in a context where the reader is expecting Christ (the 'Son of Man'), and then insinuating by two rather unexpected words that the Logos which renews Creation is not Christ but poetry. At the same time he effects a neat closure, fusing the two levels of reality distinguished in the preceding passage. The account of the poet's development takes us to the point where he confronts key Christian images, the Virgin and Child, the twelve-year-old Christ, and the adult Christ who conceals and then reveals his power. This final image is then merged with the actuality of poetic creation, and Christ's growth to manhood revealed as a metaphor for the poet's development. Thus, in «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ 'Ανθρώπου», Sikelianos

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[86] Ekdawi 1991: 45. For a discussion of this trend in Sikelianos' poetry see *ibid.* 43-5.

goes beyond the appropriation of Christian language to an appropriation of the persona of Christ. Reduced to metaphor, this Christ is logically and ontologically subordinated to the persona of the poet.

The poet now turns to the Dormition and Assumption (lines 148-82), and the poem ends with a personal supplication to the Panagia, for aid in preparation for his own death (lines 183-204) and in building a church to honour her (lines 205-27).[87] These passages do not add much to the essential appropriation in the poem, although the poet's special relationship with the Panagia (which they imply) is consistent with the displacement of Christ by the poet. The introduction of the Dormition suggests that Sikelianos brings personal experience of grief to his contemplation of the death of the Virgin (lines 148-50):[88]

> 'Αλλὰ τὴν Κοίμησή Σου,
> ὅπου μετάλαβα τὴ γνώρα τοῦ Θανάτου,
> πως να τηνε πω;

The use of the Communion verb μεταλαμβάνω is an interesting displacement, since it normally refers to a participation in the death of Christ rather than that of the Virgin. Later, still addressing the Virgin, the poet speaks of preparation of the body for death μὲ κρυφὰ τῆς πίστης Σου πιοτά (line 187), again suggesting a Communion of the Virgin. The absence of Christ from Sikelianos' account of the Assumption (which in Orthodox tradition is not bodily Assumption but the immediate translation of her soul to heaven) is also noteworthy. He uses a butterfly as a metaphor for the Virgin's soul as it leaves her body (lines 166-7):

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87 The motif of building a church as well as a number of phrases from this passage appear again in «Ἡ Παναγία τῆς Σπάρτης» (1919) (Sikelianos 1965-69: II, 82).

88 *Ἡ Συνείδηση τῆς Πίστης* was published in 1917, the year in which the poet's sister Penelope died after a long illness. Grief over her suffering and death is more obviously reflected in *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* (see pp.176-7, 186-9).

> [. . .] βγῆκεν ἡ χιονάτη πεταλούδα τῆς ψυχῆς Σου
> καὶ φτερώθηκε στὴ σκιά!

The butterfly is Sikelianos' addition (following folklore or ancient funerary iconography), but the rest is consistent with the apocryphal Assumption narratives. The oldest surviving source for some details is a Coptic text:

> [Death] appeared and when she saw him her soul leaped into the bosom of her son— white as snow, and he wrapped it in garments of fine linen. [. . .] Jesus ascended with Mary's soul in the chariot of the Cherubim.[89]

Sikelianos has removed Christ from the scene,[90] substituting 'the shade' for the 'bosom' or the 'garments' as the immediate destination of her soul.[91] And he sees the Virgin's soul becoming part of the natural world, rather than being taken up into the supernatural heaven of the Assumption narratives, sleeping 'among the scents of earth and sea' (line 177). In addressing her as Μάνα τῆς γῆς μου (line 210), the poet makes clear that the nature into which she is assumed is Greek nature. We shall see that the union of the Panagia with nature and her Hellenization are important features of Sikelianos' project in both *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* and *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, though realized differently in each poem.

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[89] James 1953: 196. Compare the Latin narrative of Pseudo-Melito: 'the apostles saw her soul [. . .] it excelled *all* whiteness of snow' (*ibid.* 213).

[90] In the Assumption narratives Christ returns to earth to be present at his mother's death.

[91] Compare the way Palamas adapts liturgical extracts concerning the Virgin so as to remove their incarnational connotations or references to Christ (pp.82-94).

3.4 *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*

Μήτηρ Θεοῦ is a long poem (558 lines) divided into five parts which were originally published separately (between May 1917 and February 1919) and did not appear together in print until 1938.[92] If the title, 'Mother of God', is understood primarily in a theological sense, as a term indicating the role of the Virgin Mary, then it seems appropriate only to Part I, which culminates in a description of an icon of the Virgin, and Part III, which includes a passage of more than fifty lines addressed to her. It is clear, however, that for Sikelianos, the phrase 'Mother of God' is not restricted to its theological meaning, and that both 'Mother' and 'God' are used in an extremely diffuse sense of female and male life-forces.[93]

Xydis speaks of the 'two female figures of the poem',[94] for 'sister' is almost as important as 'Mother'. *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* was, in part, Sikelianos' response to the fatal illness of his slightly older sister Penelope. Part I was already complete in December 1916,[95] and, though seriously ill by then, Penelope did not die until 1917.[96] Explicit references to the death of a sister are found only in Parts IV and V (published in 1918 and 1919), though personal grief is a recurrent theme in Parts II and III, and even Part I refers to the deaths of relatives (I:35-6). There are suggestions of a funeral in Part III; a visit to a cemetery, in which the poet imagines a meeting with his sister, occupies most of Part IV; and Part V contains

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[92] *Τὰ Νέα Γράμματα* 4.6/7, 433-55.

[93] Μήτηρ Θεοῦ is not, in any case, as common an expression among Greek Orthodox as 'Mater Dei' and its equivalents are among Catholics. Orthodox discourse prefers the term Θεοτόκος ('God-bearer'). Μήτηρ Θεοῦ is, however, often seen on icons (usually abbreviated to ΜΡ ΘΥ).

[94] Xydis 1938: 472.

[95] Savidis 1984: 40.

[96] Thus Xydis' statement (1973: 13) that her death was the occasion for the writing of the poem is not strictly correct.

recollections of her last days or hours.

As in the *Συνειδήσεις*, the spiritual development of the poet is central to *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*. As an act of mourning it shows us more of the mourner than the mourned; as an act of worship, more of the worshipper than the worshipped. It is an exultant and lyrical poem whose dense imagery is not easy to penetrate: Seferis said he did not know a more difficult poem written in Greek.[97]

I propose to examine only two aspects of the poem: the first is the way in which a figure identifiable with the Panagia is made present through allusions to liturgical poetry, and particularly to the Service of the Akathistos Hymn; the second, more unexpected in view of the title, is the way in which the poet's victory over death (a major element in the spiritual development which the poem celebrates) comes to involve, through the appropriation of Pauline texts, a bold displacement of Christ by the poet.

There can be no doubt that the Service of the Akathistos Hymn is in the background of *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*. In fact, the poem contains an explicit reference to it (III.33-4):

> Καμπάνα τῶν Χαιρετισμῶν, ποὺ προβοδᾶς, τὸ δείλι,
> τόσο γλυκὰ τὶς ταπεινὲς καρδιὲς πρὸς τὸν 'Απρίλη.[98]

The Χαιρετισμοί are sung for the first time each year on the first Friday in Lent, marking the beginning of the period in the ecclesiastical calendar which culminates in Easter— hence the reference to the bell accompanying 'humble hearts towards April', the month in which Easter usually falls.

Between the reference to the bell which summons people to the Akathistos Service and the quasi-devotional passage beginning Κι ὦ Μάνα

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[97] Seferis 1984: I, 87.

[98] In the prose introduction to «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο» Sikelianos again refers to a καμπάνα ποὺ καλεῖ [. . .] γιὰ τοὺς Χαιρετισμοὺς τῆς Μάνας Θεοῦ (see p.137).

(III:121) which concludes Part III (and which one might take as the poet's own version of the Χαιρετισμοί), Sikelianos describes someone in a church (ὁ ἄνθρωπος βιγλίζει στὸ στασίδι) as an ὄρθιος ὕμνος (III:76). This is, surely, the Akathistos ('unseated') Hymn.

While the Service of the Akathistos Hymn, as a familiar element of Greek experience, is clearly implicated in the matter of the poem, the extent of its influence, as a text, on the language of the poem is not easily determined. *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* contains nothing comparable to the paraphrases of excerpts from the Akathistos Hymn and Canon which Palamas incorporated into the emperor's speech in the *Φλογέρα*. There are many significant words in the imagery of *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* which are also found in the Akathistos Service, but it is difficult to decide which of them may properly be regarded as allusions, and which are purely fortuitous parallels. Part of the problem is that the Service is rich in imagery drawn from the physical world (landscape, sun, stars, weather) and the life processes of plants and animals— the same sources on which Sikelianos draws extensively in all his poetry and particularly in *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*.

The main subject of Part I is 'warmth' (ζέστα), and it is through this concept that Sikelianos makes the first, characteristically oblique, approach to the Panagia. Among many things which 'this warmth is' (I:5, 7), he includes (I:12-14):

> τὸ καντήλι τῆς Κυρᾶς, πάντα γιομάτο λάδι,
> ποὺ μὲς στὴ σκιά, κρεμάμενον ἀπὸ τὴν περιστέρα,
> τὴ νύχτα ἀνοίγει καὶ μπουμπούκι σφίγγει τὴν ἡμέρα.

Clearly Sikelianos has in mind a lamp perpetually burning before an icon of the Panagia, though effectively extinguished in the daytime. For the moment there is no more; it is not until the end of Part I that Sikelianos turns to the icon itself.

The image of the oil lamp before the icon comes at the end of a chain of images for the warmth he celebrates (I:7-12):

> Αὐτὴ εἶναι ρόδο πόγινε καὶ π' ὅλο μεγαλώνει
> σὲ μεταξένιο κέντημα, καιρούς, μὲ τὸ βελόνι·
>
> κάθε γωνιά του, ἀνασκωτὴ μ' ὁλάκερο νυχτέρι,
> ὅλο χρυσό, ποὺ πιὰ δὲν εἶναι ρόδον, εἶναι ἀστέρι·
>
> ποὺ πιὰ εἶναι τ' ἄστρο τ' ὀρθρινὸ κι ὁ λύχνος στὸ σκοτάδι
> καὶ τὸ καντήλι τῆς Κυρᾶς [. . .] !

The phrase ρόδο πόγινε καὶ π' ὅλο μεγαλώνει could be seen as a transformation of the image of the ῥόδον τὸ ἀμάραντον from the Akathistos Canon.[99] The 'rose that does not wither' becomes Sikelianos' 'rose which keeps on growing', and which cannot wither, since it is a rose in a 'silk embroidery'. This rose is now itself transformed, becoming, successively, a 'star', the 'dawn star', a 'light in the dark' and the oil lamp of the Virgin. Finally, the imagery comes full circle returning to the flower, since the καντήλι is compared, as we have already seen, to a bud which opens at night and closes up again in the day.

In the Akathistos Canon the Virgin is hailed as a star that does not set, 'leading the great Sun into the world',[100] and thus identified with the star of the Magi heralding Christ's appearance on earth.[101] The expression may have suggested 'dawn star' to Sikelianos, though his ἄστρο τ' ὀρθρινό could also be seen as a fusion of the ἄστρον ἄδυτον with

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[99] See pp.90-91.

[100] See p.113-14.

[101] The writer of the Canon has here conflated two separate lines from the earlier Akathistos Hymn. In the first the Virgin is equated with the star of the Magi in its function of making manifest Christ, the Sun: Χαῖρε, ἀστὴρ ἐμφαίνων τὸν Ἥλιον (*oikos* 1); while in the second the 'star that does not set' is Christ: Χαῖρε, ἀστέρος ἀδύτου Μήτηρ (*oikos* 9). Thus there is a precedent for Sikelianos' apparent manipulation of the imagery in the intertextuality of the liturgical sources.

another appellation of the Virgin in the Canon (Ode 3, *troparion* 3):

> Ὄρθρος φαεινός, χαῖρε, ἡ μόνη τὸν ἥλιον φέρουσα.[102]

The expression, τὸ σκότος λύσασα, from the same *troparion*, provides some of the background for Sikelianos' λύχνος στὸ σκοτάδι, but a closer parallel can be found in the Akathistos Hymn (*oikos* 21):

> Φωτοδόχον λαμπάδα, τοῖς ἐν σκότει φανεῖσαν, ὁρῶμεν τὴν ἁγίαν Παρθένον.

And the transition in Sikelianos from ἄστρο to λύχνος echoes *oikos* 8 of the Hymn:

> Θεοδρόμον ἀστέρα θεωρήσαντες Μάγοι, τῇ τούτου ἠκολούθησαν αἴγλῃ· καὶ ὡς λύχνον κρατοῦντες αὐτόν, δι' αὐτοῦ ἠρεύνων κραταιὸν Ἄνακτα.[103]

The close association, within only three lines, of 'rose', 'star', 'dawn star' and 'lamp in the darkness' argues for a conscious awareness on the part of Sikelianos of the imagery of the Akathistos Hymn and Canon. There is, however, nothing to suggest that Sikelianos was interested in the theological (chiefly incarnational) significance of the imagery in the liturgical sources (and here he differs from Palamas, whose adaptations of the same sources, discussed in §2.4, are theologically contentious). In Sikelianos the images are far less metaphorical than in the sources (or in Palamas), since they are used to indicate the nature of 'warmth', which on a phenomenal level is already closely connected with the vehicles of some of the metaphors. Though divorced from its theological context and returned

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[102] There is a comparable line in the Akathistos Hymn: χαῖρε, αὐγὴ μυστικῆς ἡμέρας (*oikos* 9).

[103] Note the related phrase μετὰ λύχνου τοῦ ἄστρου in Romanos' Kontakion No. 1 (*oikos* 14), which is adapted by Elytis (1980: 43, 44).

to the world of nature, the imagery is not altogether divorced from the Panagia. Its association with her is, however, diffuse, and dependent more on the structure of this first Part of the poem than on any explicit comparisons.

The title, 'Mother of God', points to the Panagia; and though she is present in Part I, the main subject is 'warmth': the warmth of the nest, the warmth of the 'soil' (χῶμα, I:21, and γῆ, I:23)— a nurturing warmth. 'Nest' is the unifying image of this Part: at the beginning the bird's nest; later an ants' nest (I:21-6); and at the end an eagle's nest in which the Panagia sits like a mother eagle (I:49). Thus 'nest' and 'soil', together with all the minor images, and the image of the Panagia are united as means by which Sikelianos tries to convey the qualities of that 'warmth' which he seems to present as a fundamental characteristic of the Μήτηρ Φύσις and 'natura naturans perpetuam divinitatem' to which he refers in connection with *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* in the Prologue to *Λυρικὸς Βίος*.[104]

In describing the icon, Sikelianos seems again to be aware of the imagery and language of the Akathistos Canon and, in some respects, to be deliberately diverging from it (I:45-52):

> Κι ἂν κλείσω καὶ τὰ βλέφαρα, Τή βλέπω· ὤ, πόσα, πόσα,
> τριγύρω ἀπ' τὸ καντήλι Της, τοῦ σκοταδιοῦ τὰ κρόσσα,
>
> καὶ τῶν ματιῶν Της ἡ ἄβυσσο, κ' ἡ ἀσάλευτή Της ὄψη,
> σὰ σπάθα ποὺ μπορεῖ καὶ τὴν καρδιὰ στὰ δυὸ νὰ κόψει!
>
> Ὡσὰν ἀϊτίνα κάθεται μὲς στὴν ἀϊτοφωλιά Της·
> ἀπὸ τὴ γέννα ἐσκώθηκε, κι ἀπάρθενη ἡ κοιλιά Της.
>
> Λεχώνα στέκει ἀσάλευτη μὲς στὴν ὑπομονή Της,
> σφίγγοντας, ὡσὰ νέο λιοντάρι, τὸ μονογενή Της!

Sikelianos compares the Virgin to a mother eagle sitting on her nest and

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104 Sikelianos 1965-69: I, 32-3, 34.

then to a lioness with her cub. The Akathistos Canon also applies bird and animal metaphors to the Virgin's role as bearer of Christ. First the bird (Ode 9, *troparion* 4):

> Ἡ περιστερά, ἡ τὸν ἐλεήμονα ἀποκυήσασα. χαῖρε, Ἀειπάρθενε.

Note how the image of the dove is associated with the title Ἀειπάρθενος ('Ever-Virgin'), while Sikelianos adds to his simile of the mother eagle the statement that when she 'rose from the birth', her womb was ἀπάρθενη ('virgin')— sufficient confirmation, I think, of a deliberate allusion. Sikelianos has, however, substituted the wild, aggressive and powerful eagle for the mild and domesticated dove of the Canon.[105] Similarly, the lioness and lion cub of *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* take the place of the domestic animals of the Canon (Ode 3, *troparion* 2):

> Δάμαλις τὸν μόσχον ἡ τέκουσα τὸν ἄμωμον, χαῖρε, τοῖς πιστοῖς· χαῖρε, ἀμνὰς κυήσασα Θεοῦ ἀμνόν.[106]

The mother eagle was associated with the theologically significant adjective ἀπάρθενος, and the lion cub is described by another theological adjective in the phrase τὸ μονογενή Της. In theological discourse, however, 'only-begotten' denotes Christ's relationship with God the Father and not with the Panagia.[107] Sikelianos' divergence from the theological

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[105] This transformation is consistent with the earlier simile which compared the voice of the 'mystic mother' to a bell whose sound puts the doves (περιστέρια) to flight. Note, as a possible influence here, that in the *Φλογέρα* the Panagia has eagle's wings (see p.95-6).

[106] This imagery is developed from the terser ἀμνοῦ καὶ ποιμένος μήτηρ of the Akathistos Hymn (*oikos* 7).

[107] Luke 2.7 describes Jesus' relation to Mary as τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον. The New Testament sometimes uses μονογενής of ordinary human relationships (Luke 7.12, 8.42, 9.38; Hebrews 11.17), but its theological significance is determined by the Johannine use of the word to denote, in the context of the Incarnation, the 'only-begotten son of God' (John 1.14, 1.18, 3.16, 3.18; I John 4.9). This use is, perhaps, most familiar

usage is, surely, significant in a poem which suggests the primacy of an essentially maternal nature which is the source of the divine. Sikelianos does not, I suspect, intend 'Mother of God' as the paradox it inevitably is in the context of Christian theology. There is little in *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* to suggest any underlying conception of God as a creative being antecedent to, and the source of, the natural world.[108]

Part III of *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* ends with a long passage (III:121-74) in the second person, beginning Κι ὦ Μάνα, ἀχνὸ ποὺ Σὲ φωτᾶ τὸ κρεμαστὸ καντήλι. There is more than the mention of the 'hanging lamp' to suggest that this is addressed to the icon described in Part I. The poet imagines himself uttering this self-styled 'hymn' (III:129, 151) in a church-like building whose 'dome' amplifies his voice (III:137-8); the addressee is eventually named as the Panagia (III:158), and the poet again uses the metaphor of the 'cub' for her child (III:130).[109] In this passage, according to Xydis, 'the hymn takes on the pious tone (σεμνοπρέπεια) of the Akathistos Hymn'.[110] However, neither the poem as a whole, nor the passage in question, is hymn-like in feeling; and the passage addressed to the Panagia has very few verbal connections with the Akathistos Hymn.

Though the 'hymn' is addressed to the Panagia, the poet believes that, if she mercifully inclined her ear to him, other women (πολλὲς

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from the Nicene Creed: Πιστεύω εἰς [. . .] Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενή.

[108] Sikelianos does say that the 'warmth' ἀπ' τὸ Θεὸ μονάχα εἶναι βγαλμένη (I:33), but this is an isolated instance, and need not, in any case, be understood as a theological statement. It may be no more than a periphrastic way of saying that the 'warmth' is divine. The only other use of Θεός in the poem (apart from the title) is without the definite article (III:75).

[109] Outside the 'hymn' (though anticipating his presence in a church) the poet also refers again to the Panagia as a mother eagle (III:62-4), while within the 'hymn' he adds a new animal metaphor of deer and fawn (III:139-40). In their vulnerability, which is emphasized, they are closer to the domestic animals of the Akathistos Canon (see above).

[110] Xydis 1973: 119.

γυναῖκες) would listen to his hymn with her (III:145-6) and benefit from it (III:149-50):

> Πολλὲς θὲ νὰ λουζόντανε στὴ μυστικὴ πλημμύρα:
> μάνα, παρθένα, νιόνυφη, πόρνη, ζητιάνα, χῆρα . . .

The 'mystic flood' is clearly the poet's hymn itself, but before he 'allow[s] the hymn to overflow', he 'will paint sweet images of women' for the Panagia (III:151-2). Some of these sound like icons of Christian saints, of the type where most of the painted image is covered with low-relief metalwork (ντυμένα στ' ἀνακουφωτὸ χρυσάφι καὶ στ' ἀσήμι, III:154), while others, in their nakedness and their association with ἔρωτας, sound more like pagan statues; and this cultural ambivalence extends to the Panagia (III:155-8):

> κι ἄλλα γυμνὰ καὶ μυστικά, σὰ φλωροκαπνισμένα,
> ἀπὸ τὸν ἄναρχο ἔρωτα βυθίζοντας στὸν ἕνα.
>
> γιὰ νὰ λουστοῦνε στὰ λαμπρὰ τὰ ρέματά Σου, Ὑγεία,
> τοῦ Ὀλύμπου μου πανσέληνο, γαληνὴ Παναγία![111]

Here, as in many other poems, Sikelianos equates the Panagia with pagan goddesses, this time with Hygieia explicitly (the identification reinforced by

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[111] This couplet appears to be in part a reworking of the acclamation with which the emperor's speech in Palamas' *Φλογέρα* opens (see p.108). There the emperor calls the Panagia πιὸ γαληνή, πιὸ ὡραία, and the adjective γαληνή, which Sikelianos also uses, does not appear to have a liturgical source. He also addresses her as Ἀθηνιώτισσα and calls her 'conqueror of Athena and shelter of Athens'. In Greek mythology Hygieia is both an independent minor deity and one of the manifestations of Athena. It is probably Athena Hygieia that Sikelianos has in mind, and his expression τοῦ Ὀλύμπου μου πανσέληνο, suggesting her pre-eminence among the gods, is a rough equivalent to Palamas' στὸν πιὸ ὡραῖο, πιὸ γαληνὸ μέσα στοὺς θρόνους θρόνο. What is, of course, lacking in Sikelianos is any suggestion of conflict beween the Panagia and the Olympians.

rhyme), and with Selene implicitly, both located on his own Olympus. The image of bathing (λουστοῦνε) is repeated, but the 'bright streams' in which the women are to bathe emanate from this pagan Panagia rather than the poet. This is an unsatisfactory shift in the tenor of an image within so short a space, but the image itself provides a rare point of contact between Sikelianos' 'hymn' to the Panagia and the Akathistos Hymn, whose twenty-first *oikos* is rich in imagery of water and cleansing (note in particular the phrase πολύρρυτον [. . .] ποταμόν and the noun λουτήρ):

> χαῖρε, ὅτι τὸν πολύρρυτον ἀναβλύζεις ποταμόν. Χαῖρε, τῆς κολυμβήθρας ζωγραφοῦσα τὸν τύπον [. . .]. Χαῖρε, λουτὴρ ἐκπλύνων συνείδησιν.

Sikelianos' second use of the image of bathing is consistent with the Akathistos Hymn, where the Panagia is the source or container of cleansing water, but his earlier use of the same image can be seen as an appropriation to the poet of a function of the Panagia (or, conceivably— and this independently of the Akathistos Hymn— of the priest's function in Baptism).

Most of the rest of Sikelianos' 'hymn' is occupied with images of men (III:161-73), but in the last line the poet addresses the Panagia directly once more (III:174):

> Κι ὦ, πῶς ἀπόμακρα εὐωδᾶν οἱ μυστικοί Σου κρίνοι.

This is clearly rooted in the Akathistos Canon (Ode 1, *troparion* 4):

> χαῖρε, ἡδύπνοον κρίνον, Δέσποινα, πιστοὺς εὐωδιάζον· θυμίαμα εὔοσμον, μύρον πολύτιμον.

I have extended the quotation beyond the immediately relevant reference to the 'scent of the lily' because of the many references to both incense and *myron* in *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*, and one in particular, to which I refer below.

Apart from this 'hymn', the icon and some of the imagery in Part I, and, of course, the title, there is surprisingly little in *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* which is directly connectable with the Panagia. I said earlier that 'sister' was almost as important in the poem as 'Mother', and one can observe a deliberate attempt, both at the level of structure and through imagery, to create a parallel between the sister who has died and the Panagia.

The lily is particularly associated with the Panagia, both through the iconography of the Annunciation and through liturgical metaphor (as in the example above), and Sikelianos makes repeated metaphorical use of the lily (or lilies) in *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*, notably to describe the poet's relation with both the Panagia and the sister. The poet speaks of embracing the feet of the Panagia ὡς ἡ πηγὴ τὸν κρίνο (III:131-2), and to his sister he says (IV:137-8):

> πορφυρογέννητη ψυχή, πολὺ λησμονημένη,
> τὸν ἔρωτά σου ὁ Ἔρωτας ἀκέριος τὸν προσμένει !
>
> Κρίνος περίψηλος κ' ἐγώ, μεσ' ἀπὸ τ' ἅγιο χῶμα
> στυλώνομαι στῆς ἄνοιξης τὸ νικητήριο σῶμα.
>
> Κι ὅπως, παιδί, π' ὁ ὕπνος μου τ' ἄχραντα μύρα εὐώδα
> κ' ἦταν στὰ χιόνια ἡ κλίνη μου καὶ ξύπναα μεσ' στὰ ρόδα.

The close proximity of κρίνος, μύρα (qualified by the liturgical epithet ἄχραντα) and εὐώδα suggests an awareness once more of the words from the Akathistos Canon quoted above. The imagery here, though, is obscure. It appears that in the context of words addressed to the dead sister, the 'holy ground' is her grave, where the poet imagines himself as a tall lily.[112] This lily is, I think, an emblem both of the Resurrection (the 'victorious body') and, less obviously, of the Annunciation. The introduction of

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[112] The image may derive from the lily growing from the grave of the icon painter in Palamas' *Φλογέρα* (see Palamas 1962-69: 110-11 and p.112 above).

Gabriel's emblem of the lily, following so closely on the reference to Eros awaiting the sister's love, suggests a connection with the eroticized Annunciation scenes in «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ 'Ανθρώπου» and *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, and especially the latter, where Eros is named in the text.[113] The third of the couplets quoted above (and the two that follow it) appear to evoke childhood memories of a partly erotic devotion to an elder sister.[114] Through the image of the lily the poet comes to his sister as Gabriel to the Panagia, but his message is one of resurrection.[115]

There are other images which more directly connect the sister and the Panagia. Laurel and palm are associated with both of them, as is the scent of distant flowers.[116] In relation to each of them the poet sees himself as a painter. For the Panagia his hand 'writes on iconostases in gold (τὸ χρυσάφι) that runs like ivy' (IV:133-4), and for her he 'will paint sweet images of women' (III:152). The sister on her deathbed commanded him to paint her ὁλοζώντανη (V:46), and on her coffin 'Memory, with a gold pencil (τὸ κοντύλι τὸ χρυσό) and with kohl' will draw her portrait (V:29-32).

As for the structural parallels, Part I culminates in a description of an icon of the Panagia and Part III in a passage addressed to that icon, while Part IV concludes with an imagined encounter with the sister in a cemetery, prompted by an image (presumably a photograph) which looks up at the poet from the grave (the equivalent of the icon of the Panagia);[117]

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[113] See pp.166-8, 211-20.

[114] The poet refers in this context to τὰ δωδεκά μου χρόνια (IV:142). It is possible that his eroticization of the Δωδεκαετὴς Χριστός (see p.170) may reflect his own erotic awakening at that age. On the erotic aspect of the relation with the sister see also IV:129-30.

[115] On the poet as agent of the resurrection of the dead see pp.194-6.

[116] Compare III:63-5 with IV:101, 128; and I:56 with IV:92.

[117] Lambridi's assumption (1939: 1032) that this is not a portrait of the sister but is 'chosen at random from the grave stones' and 'represents every young creature struck down in the flower of youth' is surely mistaken.

and Parts IV and V both conclude with lines addressed to the sister. The poet seems transfixed by the grave portrait's stare and asks (addressing his father) that she might take her eyes away from him for a moment so that he can utter τὸ χερουβικὸ τροπάρι (IV:95-8). This links the sister with the Panagia not only through the intention to speak to her in liturgical poetry,[118] but also through the powerful effect of the eyes in the photograph, reminding us of the Panagia's 'steadfast gaze [. . .] which can cut the heart in two' in Part I.[119]

In Parts IV and V the sister effectively displaces the Panagia as the focus of the poem, so that the sister too is implicitly identified with the 'Mother of God' of the title. Both Panagia and sister are aspects of idealized womanhood, objects of worship and sources of poetic inspiration. The sister of the vision in the cemetery is 'intangible and unapproachable as the Muse' (IV:104), and later the poet asks her, 'did I not hear, in a dream, the lyre of your voice?' (V:38). And most significantly, the dying sister's command that the poet paint her, coming at the very end of the poem— the closing words are ὁλοζώντανη γιὰ νὰ σὲ ζωγραφίσω— suggests that in fact the whole poem is her portrait, and that the sister is the originating image of the Μήτηρ Θεοῦ the poem celebrates; and consequently that the primary role of the Μήτηρ Θεοῦ is as Muse, and that the 'God' whose 'Mother' she is is first and foremost the poet. The elevation of the sister to the level of the Panagia or Mother Nature is consistent with the poet's self-elevation to the level of Christ. The latter is evident in the poet's role in the resurrection of the dead as this is developed through appropriations of Pauline teachings.

Victory over death is one of the principal themes of the poem. This

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118 It is not clear whether Sikelianos has any particular 'troparion' in mind, and it is most unlikely, given its content, that he is referring to the Χερουβικὸς Ὕμνος in the Liturgy of John Chrysostom.

119 See p.181.

first becomes evident in Part II, which celebrates a critical moment (τὴν ὥρα ἐκείνη), at which the poet gave way to grief (II:24): but 'in the depths of weeping' (II:31-2) something new stirred within him. He compares the experience to a woman's first awareness of the child in her womb (II:39-48). In the lines that follow he recounts how nature spoke to him with many voices which are in the end condensed into a single phrase (II:92):

σὰν ἄστρο μέσα μου ἔτρεμε μικρό, τὸ **'Εν τούτῳ Νίκα**![120]

The words 'Εν τούτῳ Νίκα belong to Constantine I's legendary vision before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312. They were said to have been inscribed on a cross of light which Constantine saw in the sky.[121] Their introduction at this point seems abrupt and arbitrary until one looks closely at one of the images which precede them (II:81-4):

Τὸ λαβωμένο τὸ πουλὶ δὲν ἤμουν στὸ κυνήγι,
ποὺ ἀπὸ τὴ φούχτα, σὰν καρδιά, παλεύει νὰ ξεφύγει,

καὶ μηδ' αὐτὸ ποὺ λύγισεν αἰφνίδια τὸ κεφάλι,
μὲ κόκκινη ὅλη τοῦ φτεροῦ τὴ μαλακιὰ ἀμασχάλη.

The second 'wounded bird', which 'suddenly inclines its head' is the crucified Christ of John's Gospel, who κλίνας τὴν κεφαλὴν παρέδωκε τὸ πνεῦμα,[122] and the redness under the bird's wing is the wound in Christ's side made by the soldier's lance.[123]

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[120] This line echoes *Paradiso* 26.53: 'come stella in cielo in me scintilla'. Here Dante's Pilgrim is also referring to a verbal object, the 'evangelica dottrina' in which he believes.

[121] Eusebius is the source of this legend (*De vita Constantini* 1.28).

[122] John 19.30.

[123] John 19.34. The allusion here may have been mediated for Sikelianos by the Pelican, an established symbol for the wounded Christ, associated primarily with the Greek bestiary known as the *Physiologus* (*New Catholic Encyclopedia* XI, 60; Declerck 1981: 152). Note

The poet tells us, in effect, that he is not the crucified Christ; and the next couplet indicates that he is in a sense greater than Christ (II:85-6):

> Θέλοντας τὴν ἀνέβαζα τὴν πιὸ πικρὴν εἰκόνα,
> σὰ μιὰ τρυγόνα ὁ σταυραϊτός, στὸν καθαρὸ Ἑλικώνα!

The 'most bitter image' (or 'icon')— a phrase which might independently have suggested the Crucifixion— is the wounded bird of the previous couplet. The eagle of the simile is not, I think, behaving as a bird of prey, for it represents the poet as the rescuer of Christ the 'turtledove'.[124] This rescue is presented in language very similar to that which we have already seen in «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο», where the 'Myth of Jesus' φωνάζει ὡς τὸ πουλὶ πόχει γλιστρήσει ἀπ' τὴ φωλιά and

> στὰ πλάγια τοῦ Ἑλικώνα [. . .] ὁ Ποιητὴς [. . .] σηκώνοντας τὸ Μύθο, παίρνει πάλι τὸν ἀνήφορο τοῦ θείου βουνοῦ, γιὰ νὰ τὸν ἀνεβάσει στὴν κορφή.[125]

The fact that a remarkably similar conceit, again involving the carrying of a bird to the summit of Helicon, is now applied to an 'image' of the Crucifixion, provides a strong link with the juvenile poems in which Jesus at the moment of death becomes a pagan god (see §3.2). In the later poems the installation on Helicon, sacred to the Muses, of his 'myth' or 'image' clearly represents his integration into the ancient pantheon.

The implicit presence of the Muses suggests that the raising of the 'Myth' or 'image' by the Poet/eagle represents its transformation into a

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that ἀμασχάλη, hardly a common word in Sikelianos, was used of the twelve-year-old Christ in «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ 'Ανθρώπου» (see p.170).

[124] In Song of Songs 2.12 the φωνὴ τῆς τρυγόνος is a sign of returning Spring and thus, in Patristic theology, a type of the Resurrection.

[125] Sikelianos 1965-69: IV, 71. See also pp.137-8 above. «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο», though published later than Part II of *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*, may have been written at the same time or even earlier.

poetic image. The eagle carrying the turtledove is a very nice metaphor for appropriation: the poet takes to himself the crucified Christ and offers him to the Muses. The appropriation of the Crucifixion, or at least of the Cross, is also figured in another way, in the poet's appropriation of the 'Εν τούτῳ Νίκα of Constantine; but it is the earlier appropriation of the 'most bitter image' of the Crucifixion which provides the referent of ἐν τούτῳ.

That the victory in question is victory over death is made clear some lines later, when the poet declares (II:122):

> τρεῖς χρόνους ἀγγελομαχῶ καὶ νικητὴς ἐβγῆκα ![126]

The verb ἀγγελομαχῶ normally refers to the struggle of a dying person with the 'angel' of their own death. Sikelianos is, presumably, using it here of a spiritual struggle, a coming to terms, perhaps, with death itself. Alternatively he may be referring to his involvement in his sister's struggle with death through a protracted illness. Biographical details aside, the 'three years' echo the 'three days' from Christ's death to Resurrection.

The 'Εν τούτῳ Νίκα (printed in bold in the original) is one of only two verbatim quotations in *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*, and the second, which is Biblical, is closely related to it: the Pauline Κατεπόθη ὁ Θάνατος εἰς νῖκος,[127] which appears as the epigraph to Part V.

Paul's assertion that 'Death is swallowed up in victory' follows a reference to the 'last trumpet':

> πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα [. . .] ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ σάλπιγγι· σαλπίσει γάρ, καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐγερθήσονται ἄφθαρτοι.[128]

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[126] This line is related to the words of Constantine's vision through a common rhyme word: Νίκα and ἐβγῆκα are each rhymed with γλύκα.

[127] I Corinthians 15.54, a garbled quotation from Isaiah 25.8 (*LXX*).

[128] I Corinthians 15.51-2. This extended discussion of the meaning of the resurrection of the dead also includes the saying, ὃ σπείρεις, οὐ ζωοποιεῖται ἐὰν μὴ ἀποθάνῃ (*ibid.* 15.36). The same idea, expressed in a more familiar form in the saying attributed to

Sikelianos alludes to this at the end of Part IV (145-6):

> Θωρῶ καὶ τῆς ἀνάστασης ἡ σάλπιγγα μοῦ στρώνει
> τὸ δρόμο ὁποὺ τὴ σάρκα μου στὸν πόθο της λυτρώνει![129]

This is, though perhaps not deliberately, contentious in relation to the source, for Paul says that 'flesh (σάρξ) and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable'.[130] But he goes on to say that

> δεῖ γὰρ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθανασίαν.[131]

and Sikelianos may be aware of this, since he is clearly aware in this poem of other Pauline metaphors of dressing.[132]

When he composed *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*, Sikelianos clearly had a particular interest in Paul's ideas about the resurrection of the dead. In Part III there are allusions to passages from two other Pauline Epistles which discuss this theme. Both are implicated in the following couplet (III:89-90):

> Τί ἂν πᾶνε πίσω οἱ ζωντανοὶ καὶ μπρὸς οἱ πεθαμένοι;
> Ἄχ, τὸ κορμὶ τῆς δόξας μου καιρὸ ποὺ τοὺς προσμένει!

Jesus (but possibly derived from Paul) in John 12.24, underlies the seed imagery in *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*. See for example I:40-42; and see p.172 n.85 above.

[129] Here πόθο may be an oblique pun on Paul's κατεπόθη. The association of 'trumpet of the resurrection' and 'road' indicates an awareness of Solomos' «Ὁ Κρητικός» (written like *Μητηρ Θεοῦ* in fifteen-syllable rhymed couplets): Λάλησε, Σάλπιγγα! κι' ἐγὼ τὸ σάβανο τινάζω, / Καὶ σχίζω δρόμο καὶ τς ἀχνοὺς ἀναστημένους κράζω (Solomos 1961: 198).

[130] I Corinthians 15.50.

[131] I Corinthians 15.53.

[132] Θώρακα νέον ἀνίκητο θαρρεῖ κ' εἶναι ντυμένο / τὸ πνέμα (II:69-70) seems to conflate two Pauline metaphors: ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης [...] δέξασθε and τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ Πνεύματος (Ephesians 6.14, 17).

'The body of my glory' is, in Philippians, 'the body of his [i.e. Christ's] glory'.[133] Paul writes that 'our commonwealth is in heaven',

> ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, ὃς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι αὐτὸ σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ.[134]

In appropriating this final phrase, the poet puts himself in the position of Christ, with a corresponding change in perspective. Whereas in Paul it is 'we' who 'await' (ἀπεκδεχόμεθα) Christ, in Sikelianos it is the poet's body which 'awaits' (προσμένει) 'them' ('the living' and 'the dead').

The idea that the living precede the dead — an idea which seems arbitrary and perplexing in Sikelianos— is derived from I Thessalonians, where Paul claims knowledge of the sequence of events at the Parousia:

> ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ Κυρίου οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν τοὺς κοιμηθέντας· ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι Θεοῦ καταβήσεται ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ, καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον, ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἁρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ Κυρίου εἰς ἀέρα.[135]

Paul's purpose in this passage is to inform the Thessalonians 'concerning those that are asleep (τῶν κεκοιμημένων) that [they] may not grieve as others do who have no hope'.[136] A few lines after the reference to the 'body of my glory', Sikelianos writes as one who had been without hope, speaking of the dead as (III:103)

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[133] My translation (*RSV*: 'his glorious body').

[134] Philippians 3.20-21.

[135] I Thessalonians 4.15-17.

[136] I Thessalonians 4.13.

Ἐκείνους πόλεα κ' ἔχασα γιὰ πάντα μιὰν ἡμέρα.

but who now is no longer in that state, for he sees them again in a vision clearly borrowed from Paul (III:104):

σὰ σύννεφα ἀνοιξιάτικα τοὺς βλέπω στὸν ἀγέρα!

And, as though prompted by Paul's description of Christ coming 'with the archangel's call', Sikelianos now names two archangels (III:105-6):

Κριτὴς Μιχαήλ, Κριτὴς Γαβριὴλ γοργοπετάει μπροστά τους,
κι ἀκούω πυκνά, καθὼς τὸ θρὸ τῆς λεύκας, τὰ φτερά τους.

At this point, where Sikelianos comes closest to a specifically Christian concept of the Last Judgement, the archangels are, through the simile, assimilated to nature. In the Christian vision, furthermore, it is Christ who is Judge, not the archangels; and the dead of the poem are not about 'to meet the Lord in the air', nor are they summoned by the 'archangel's call' and the 'sound of the trumpet'. Instead it is the poet who is the source of the sound that summons them, and it is to him that they come (III:91-2):

Γοργὸ ὡς τραντάζει τῆς ψυχῆς βαθιά μου τὸ στημόνι,
τῶν κοιμημένων μου ὁ λαὸς ἀκούει καὶ μὲ σιμώνει.[137]

While the poet does not explicitly appropriate the role of Christ as all-powerful Judge, he clearly displaces Christ in the visionary elements borrowed from Paul, and in so doing removes the resurrection of the dead from its eschatological context. Moreover, the poet clearly beomes in some sense the agent of the resurrection; and it may be that in his wilder flights of fancy Sikelianos imagined that the poet could offer the dead something

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[137] Here Sikelianos follows the Christian convention of referring to the dead as 'asleep'. This is not, of course, uncommon, but worth noting since the same usage occurs in both of the Pauline passages under discussion.

more substantial than their immortalization in verse.[138]

In the passages concerned with the general resurrection, *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* offers perhaps the clearest examples of the appropriation of Christ by the poet to be found in the work of Sikelianos, effected through the distortion of Biblical language and the substitution of the first person (the poetic ego) for Christ (or pronouns denoting Christ) in phrases derived from the Pauline Epistles.[139] Only in Elytis (among the poets considered here) will more vivid and less circumspect examples of this strategy be found.

In the image of the wounded bird rescued by the poet/eagle and carried up to Helicon, we have an appropriation even more presumptuous than that in the resurrection motifs. The wounded bird is the Christ of John's Passion narrative, and it is probably no accident that the poet portrays himself as an eagle, the symbol of the Fourth Evangelist. Not only is the poet, as eagle, superior to Christ, the wounded bird, but, as Fifth Evangelist, he is also completing and correcting John, installing Christ on Helicon, shorthand for the ancient culture, and making him into a Greek god. The corrective is essentially the same as in «Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος», where the poet, simultaneously appropriating and denying John's words, insists that what *really* flowed from the wound in Christ's side was not water and blood but ichor.

Christ is only present in this poem in the figure of the wounded bird rescued by the poet and as the infant compared to a lion club. Indirectly he is invoked through the Pauline language of the general resurrection, but

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138 Kazantzakis relates (n.d.: 233-6), with perhaps some factual basis (if only in speculative conversation), an attempt by Sikelianos, in 1914, to restore to life a dead tailor, whose corpse had been sent to him.

139 The substitution of the poet for Christ in «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ του Ἀνθρώπου» is more subtle, accomplished as much through the organization of the material, as through its appropriations of Christian language. More subtle too are the assimilations of Christ to the poet in «Ἄγραφον» (pp.241-3) and the poems uniting Christ with Dionysus (§3.7).

this is applied exclusively to the poet. There is no sense of a divine Christ who might be an object of worship. The attitude of worship is evident only in relation to the Μήτηρ Θεοῦ, a figure of more universal significance than the Panagia: Mother Nature compounded with the image of the Panagia and the spirit of the poet's sister. Thus the Μήτηρ Θεοῦ encompasses the Panagia, as the poet, as the superior bird, encompasses Christ; and as an eagle the poet makes himself a suitable consort to the Panagia, the mother eagle in her nest. As in «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου», the underlying dynamic of the poem is that of the poet, supreme among men and gods, facing his Goddess-Muse.[140]

Though the presence of the poet is limited in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, there are indications that there too he combines the roles of worshipper of the Panagia and rescuer and displacer of Christ.

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140 Compare the emperor of the *Φλογέρα* confronting, throughout most of three Cantos, the image of his divine patroness and protectress; and note the importance in each case of an icon of the Panagia.

3.5 The Panagia in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*

Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων[141] is the only extensive poetic work by Sikelianos which is not dominated by the first person. The role of the poet and the exploration of his own consciousness are the basic themes of Sikelianos' poetry, the dramatization of his inner life its characteristic mode. This is indeed the mode in which *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* (hereafter 'ΠΕ') begins, and which provides an outer frame for its narrative centre. The poet's mind, alone in the contemplation of nature, is the theme of Part I, «Καθαρμοί». In Parts II and III, «Ὁ Ὕμνος στὴν Ἑλένη» and «Τὸ Τραγούδι τῶν Ἀργοναυτῶν», the first-person voice serves to provide a context for the 'Hymn' and 'Song', which, though they are contained within a first-person narrative, belong to other voices and are presented within quotation marks. In Part IV, «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο», the first-person voice introduces its own retelling of the 'great story of the Panagia' (IV:52). This story, beginning at IV:53, proceeds without further first-person-singular interventions, to the end of Part VII; and the third-person narrative mode is further sustained in Parts VIII-X, which relate incidents from the life of Jesus.[142] Only in the final quatrain of Part X, «Μαγδαληνή», does the poet reappear in the first person, imagining himself as a devotee of Mary Magdalene, worshipping her relics. This quatrain effects the transition to the final part, Part XI, «Ὕμνος στὴν Παναγία», which, unlike the earlier 'Hymn to Helen' and 'Song of the Argonauts' is entirely in the poet's own voice.

Although ΠΕ has, as the foregoing summary suggests, some degree of formal coherence, one must not forget that it is incomplete. The story of the early life of the Virgin in Parts IV-VII forms a continuous narrative.

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[141] Sikelianos 1965-69: IV, 43-141.

[142] There is occasional use of a generic 'we', especially in Part X.

but stops short of the birth of Christ, despite the title, «Ἡ Γέννηση», of Part VII. Parts VIII-X are isolated episodes in the life of Christ with no pretence at narrative continuity. Sikelianos claimed that in 1938 he lost ἕνα μεγάλο τετράδιο μὲ ἀνέκδοτα Ἄσματα ἀπὸ τὸ «Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων», ποὺ συνεχίζανε το Ποίημα. Of the parts said to be in the notebook only three are extant: the «Ὕμνος στὴν Παναγία» (Sikelianos found a second copy among his papers) and 'two extracts which had been published in Egypt'.[143] When Sikelianos says that the lost Ἄσματα 'continued the Poem' he probably means that they continued the narrative which stopped short before the Nativity at the end of Part VII. Information from Xydis tends to confirm this. Xydis says that Sikelianos told him that he had drafted passages dealing with 'Christ's teaching in Galilee, the Sermon on the Mount, the miracles, Passion and Crucifixion', and that further parts were planned. 'There would follow', Xydis continues, still presumably paraphrasing a private communication from the poet, 'something on the Resurrection, and from there the poem would make its transition to the universal mythical cycle'.[144]

As it stands, ΠΕ contains nothing at all about the Passion or Resurrection— nothing, that is, to justify the Πάσχα of its title. Some indication of what the 'Easter of the Greeks' meant to Sikelianos may be gleaned from «Στ' Ὄσιου Λουκᾶ τὸ μοναστήρι», where, as already noted,[145] the body in the Epitaphios is both Christ and Adonis. The 'universal mythical cycle' probably meant, primarily, the corpus of ancient Greek mythology; and the 'transition' to it, the incorporation of Christ and the Virgin into the Olympian pantheon.

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[143] Sikelianos 1946-47: III, 129. Sikelianos is presumably referring to «Ὁ Ἰησοῦς στὴ Βηθανία» and «Μαγδαληνή», which had been published in the Alexandrian periodical *Γράμματα* in 1926.

[144] Xydis 1973: 135.

[145] On p.142.

While the failure to complete ΠΕ may be partly attributable to the loss of the notebook, Sikelianos is credited with a prodigious memory, and could, had he had the will to do so, have recalled or recomposed the lost material. It is possible that he had set himself a task which ultimately proved uncongenial: the absence of the poetic ego from the greater part of the poem excluded some of Sikelianos' most characteristic modes of expression. Sikelianos was not naturally inclined to narrative poetry, and the self-imposed discipline of following a predetermined narrative line (the lives of the Panagia and Christ) over so great a span may have stifled his imagination. There are places where one can sense him struggling against his sources; and his unwillingness to follow them too closely sometimes leads him into narrative incoherence. Furthermore, the size of the project and the close detail involved in his rewriting of the Christian story may have made the ultimate objective, the integration of Christian and pagan myths, more difficult to achieve, particularly since Sikelianos' treatment of his Christian sources tends to suppress supernatural elements and stress the human characteristics of the Panagia and Christ, locating them in the world of nature rather than the world of myth.

Sikelianos' stated purpose in ΠΕ, to raise the 'Myth of Jesus' out of the darkness to the level of ancient Greek mythology, has already been discussed.[146] The concept of 'darkness' (or 'obscurity') in this context suggests something of the Flute's hostility to Byzantine culture in Palamas' *Φλογέρα*. But the *Φλογέρα* presents an unresolved conflict between the two main elements of the modern Greek cultural heritage, classical and Christian, while no such conflict is evident in ΠΕ. The latter fails to achieve a cultural synthesis— if for no other reason— simply because it is incomplete. We do not know how Sikelianos would in the end have made the 'transition to the 'universal mythical cycle'. The integration of the two

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[146] See pp.137-8, 189-91.

cultural strands is, in fact, better realized (though on a smaller scale) in other poems of Sikelianos discussed in this chapter, where the close juxtaposition of Christian and pagan elements makes the author's intention immediately apparent. In ΠΕ the projected syncretism was clearly intended to operate on a much larger scale.

Both syncretism and another strategy of appropriation are hinted at in the opening lines of the work (I:1-5):

> Ντυμένος τὸ μυρόβλητον ἀθλητικὸ χιτώνα,
> στῆς ἡλικίας τὸ πλήρωμα σὰν ἦρθα τοῦ Χριστοῦ,
> τοῦ πάνοπλου Ἔρωτα γυμνὴ τὴν ἄμετρην εἰκόνα
> τηρώντας, μὲς στοῦ πόθου μου τὰ βάθη τοῦ μεστοῦ,
>
> στερνὴν ὡσὰ ν' ἀντίκρισα τὸν Ἑλικώνα.

To refer, in so prominent a position, to the coincidence of the poet's age and the age of Christ at his death (usually taken to be thirty-three, the age Sikelianos reached in 1917) suggests the poet's intention to appropriate some aspects of the role of Christ, but this remains unrealized within ΠΕ, though it is evident in a number of other poems, some of which have already been discussed.[147] More specifically, the reference to maturity ('in the depths of my mature longing') might be taken to imply that the poet's mature work begins where the work of Christ was cut short by his death. Indeed, the idea of taking up the mantle of Christ is clearly implied by the statement in «Ὕμνος στὴν Ἑλένη» that τῆς θεότητας φορέσαμε τὸν ἄρραφο χιτώνα (II:111), alluding to Christ's 'tunic' for which the soldiers who crucified him cast lots: ἦν δὲ ὁ χιτὼν ἄρραφος, ἐκ τῶν ἄνωθεν ὑφαντὸς δι' ὅλου.[148] The wearers of the ἄρραφος χιτώνας are worshippers of Helen, and thus formally distinct from the poet who hears their Hymn. But they are obviously his mouthpieces, and the ἄρραφος

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147 See pp.168-74, 192-5, 252-6, 263-4.

148 John 19.23-4.

χιτών may, surely, be related to the μυρόβλητος ἀθλητικὸς χιτώνας which the poet wore when when he 'reached the fullness of the age of Christ', suggesting that the latter is also the 'tunic' of Christ. At the age at which Christ died, and dressed (perhaps) in Christ's last garment, the poet does not, like Christ, embrace death, but what is (in Freudian terms) its opposite, Eros. He does not ascend the Mount of Olives or Golgotha, but Helicon, and what he holds in his mind is the 'matchless image of fully armed Eros'. Christ is referred to only obliquely, as a measure of the poet's age, and is, in a sense, subordinated both to the poet and to the pagan Eros, and more generally to the pagan world symbolized by Helicon, to which (in *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* and «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο») it is the poet's self-appointed task to raise the 'Myth of Jesus'. Clearly, a far-reaching and highly subversive appropriation of Christianity, wedding it to Greek paganism and using it to elevate the persona of the poet, underlies ΠΕ, but it remains largely unrealized in the extant parts of the poem. The passage dealing with the Annunciation (discussed at length below) is a notable exception.

Many of the borrowings from Apocryphal, Biblical and (occasionally) liturgical sources in ΠΕ cannot really be described as appropriation, for there are passages (some quite extended) which could be read as examples of Christian poetry. They could be seen, that is, as part of the same long tradition of Christian discourse, to which the ecclesiastical texts on which they are partly dependent belong. The wider context, which in the completed poem might have rendered these borrowings appropriative, is, for the most part, lacking. For this reason (and because a detailed analysis of so long a poem would, in any case, be impractical within the confines of this chapter), I shall restrict myself to illustrating the ways in which ΠΕ presents a distorted reflection of its sources. In this section I shall discuss only those parts of the poem devoted to the Panagia, concentrating on Part IV which takes the story up to the Annunciation.

Sikelianos' principal source in Parts IV-VII is the Protevangelium Iacobi.[149] This Latin title may have influenced Sikelianos in his choice of «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγελιο» for the title of Part IV, though he probably found the term 'Fifth Gospel' in Renan.[150] In the Introduction to his *Vie de Jésus*, Renan describes the landscape of Palestine as 'un cinquième Évangile';[151] and in the text he frequently adds topographical details (from his own first-hand knowledge) telling us what Jesus and other persons would have seen around them. This practice, and the idea of landscape as Gospel, may have influenced Sikelianos, for one of the most obvious ways in which Parts IV-VII of ΠΕ differ from the Protevangelium is in the prominence of the natural environment.

The Protevangelium, which already existed in some form in the second century, begins with the conception of the Virgin and ends with the events surrounding the births of Jesus and John the Baptist. In the latter parts it is dependent on, but amplifies considerably, the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke. The Protevangelium is the ultimate source of most of the legends about the childhood and youth of the Virgin prior to the

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149 This title was first applied to the work in the sixteenth century (James 1953: 38.), and has no equivalent in Greek. The several manuscripts of the work have long and varied Greek titles, most of them referring to the 'birth of the Theotokos' and many characterizing the text as ἱστορία or λόγος ἱστορικός (Tischendorf 1853: 1-2). Compare Sikelianos' expression, ἱστορίζω/ τῆς Παναγιᾶς τὸ στόρισμα (IV:51-2), though this is suggestive more of graphic portrayal.

150 While it is only Part IV which has the title «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο», all the subsequent parts of the poem, except the last, are a continuation of the 'Fifth Gospel': the retelling of the 'Myth of Jesus'. Had Sikelianos ever been in a position to re-edit the completed work, he might have used the title 'Fifth Gospel' for some larger unity within it, for it does not seem well suited to Part IV which relates only the early life of the Virgin up to the Annunciation.

151 Renan 1867: xcix. Sikelianos employs a similar conceit in «Τὸ Τραγούδι τῶν Ἀργοναυτῶν» (III:175-6): κ' ἡ σιγὴ τὴ βίβλο ξετυλίγει. / μιὰν ἴδια βίβλο: τοῦ πελάου, τῆς γῆς, καὶ τ' οὐρανοῦ, alluding at the same time to the sixth and seventh seals of the Apocalypse (Revelation 6.13-14, 18.1).

Annunciation. The early life of the Virgin has been, at least since the mid-Byzantine period, a popular theme for cycles of frescoes and mosaics in Orthodox churches, and consequently the main episodes are familiar to many people who have had no contact with the text of the Protevangelium.[152] This is not, of course, the case with Sikelianos: Xydis has illustrated or listed many of the instances of close verbal dependence on the Protevangelium in Parts IV-VII of ΠΕ,[153] and others will emerge in the present discussion. Sikelianos' other sources are the Apocryphal Gospel of Thomas (for the stories from the childhood of Jesus in Part VIII) and the Canonical Gospels (especially in Parts VIII-X).

One can see right at the start of the narrative part of «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο» Sikelianos' desire to universalize— or, perhaps, more importantly, to Hellenize— the Christian myth, in this case by removing the story of the conception, birth and early life of the Virgin as far as possible from its context in Jewish law and observance.[154] The Protevangelium begins by focusing on Ioachim, the father of the Virgin. He is a rich man who, when a feast day is approaching, goes to make an offering, but is debarred from being the first to make his offerings on the grounds of his childlessness. Ioachim is 'sore grieved' and instead of returning home to his wife, Anna, goes into the wilderness, vowing to remain there until God should 'visit him'.[155] News of this evidently reaches Anna, who, thinking her husband now lost to her, laments both her

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[152] Some of the episodes are referred to in liturgical texts. See in particular the *Menologion* for 8 September (Birth of the Theotokos) and 21 November (Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple).

[153] Xydis 1973: 141-3.

[154] That the Protevangelium is inaccurate in such matters— James remarks (1953: 38) that 'the author is not familiar with Jewish life or usages'— is irrelevant, for this would hardly be Sikelianos' reason for avoiding such material.

[155] Protevangelium 1.1-4. Quotations in English are from the translation by James (1953: 39-49), those in Greek from Tischendorf's edition (1853: 1-48).

widowhood and her childlessness. Urged by her maid as the feast day approaches, she replaces her mourning garments with wedding garments.[156] It is only at this point, towards the end of the second chapter of the Protevangelium, that Sikelianos takes up the story, showing us only the immediately comprehensible longing of a childless woman for a child, without any reference to her husband's humiliation among his peers (IV:53-6):

> Τὰ νυφικά της φόρεσε, τὰ ὥρια στολίδια ἡ Ἄννα,
> σὰ λούστηκε, καὶ κάθησε σὲ δάφνης τὴν ἰσκιά,
> κ' εἶπε μὲ θρῆνο: «Δέσποτα, δὲ θέλω γίνει μάνα,
> ἐγὼ λαμπάδα, ποὺ ἄναψα μπροστά σου, νυφικιά;»

While Anna's question is almost pure Sikelianos, the first two lines of this quatrain follow closely, but abbreviate, the source:

> Ἄννα [. . .] ἀπεσμήξατο τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῆς καὶ ἐνεδύσατο τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῆς τὰ νυμφικά, καὶ περὶ τὴν ὥραν ἐνάτην κατέβη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον τοῦ περιπατῆσαι. καὶ εἶδε δαφνηδαίαν, καὶ ἐκάθισεν ὑποκάτω αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐλιτάνευσεν τὸν δεσπότην λέγουσα Ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, εὐλόγησόν με καὶ ἐπάκουσον τῆς δεήσεώς μου, καθὼς εὐλογήσας τὴν μήτραν Σάρρας καὶ ἔδωκας αὐτῇ υἱὸν τὸν Ἰσαάκ.[157]

Sikelianos makes no use of the allusion to Sarah and Isaac, but gives more direct expression to Anna's desire for a child ('Shall I not become a mother?'). He takes δεσπότην from the narrative and transposes it, as Δέσποτα, into the direct speech, where it displaces the more specifically

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[156] Protevangelium 2.1-3.

[157] Protevangelium 2.4. James seems to be aware of an alternative to ἀπεσμήξατο which is not recorded in Tischendorf's apparatus, for he translates 'cleansed (or adorned) her head'. The text used by Sikelianos may have incorporated such a variant, from which he might have derived τὰ ὥρια στολίδια. On the other hand, he may simply have had in mind the profusion of ornaments in traditional Greek bridal costumes.

Jewish 'God of our fathers'. (In Orthodox liturgical texts Δεσπότης usually denotes Christ.) The lighting of a votive lamp as an act of private supplication reflects an Orthodox rather than a Jewish custom. As an element added by Sikelianos this lamp is the first indication of a tendency which pervades his retelling of the Virgin's story: the introduction of imagery and epithets of light, without basis in the Protevangelium.[158]

Given Sikelianos' fondness for nest imagery, and his use of it in the introduction to «Πέμπτο Εὐάγγελιο», it is, at first sight, surprising that he doesn't take up the 'nest of sparrows' of the Protevangelium:

> καὶ ἀτενίσασα εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἶδε καλιὰν στρουθίων ἐν τῇ δαφνηδαίᾳ, καὶ ἐποίησε θρῆνον ἐν ἑαυτῇ.

Anna goes on to speak of herself as a 'curse', 'reproached' and 'mocked' by her own people;[159] and again Sikelianos ignores this particularly Jewish dimension of her childlessness. The sparrows, generalized as 'birds', are present in the poem, but they have not reached the stage of nesting (IV:57-60):

> Τὰ μάτια ἐσήκωσε ψηλὰ κ' εἶδε, στὰ κλώνια μέσα
> τῆς δάφνης, μὲ τὸν ἔρωτα πῶς παῖζαν δυὸ πουλιά,
> καὶ τοῦ καημοῦ της πιότερον ἐπλήθυνεν ἡ ἀνέσα
> καὶ στὴν εὐκὴ τῆς σκώθηκε σὰν κύμα ἡ ἀγκαλιά . . .

In this quatrain we see two further characteristic features of Sikelianos' adaptation of Christian texts. One is a tendency to draw out or intensify erotic implications or possibilities in the source. What the author of the

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158 See, for example, the repeated use of the adjectives ὁλόφωτος and λαμπρός in the quatrains that follow. Ὁλόφωτος describes Ioachim returning from his fast (IV:63), the cradle (68) and the temple (94), while λαμπρός is used of a greeting (64), incense (80) and gladness (93).

159 Protevangelium 3.1.

Protevangelium envisaged was a nest with young.[160] What Sikelianos has Anna see is a pair of birds 'amorously playing'.[161] The other characteristic is the introduction into the narrative of imagery drawn from nature: 'like a wave' is a minor example.

The answer to Anna's prayers is presented in a highly simplified form in Sikelianos. Ioachim, mentioned here for the first time, returns ὁλόφωτος from his (unexplained) fast,[162] and meets Anna with this λαμπρὸ χαιρετισμό, «Ἄννα, ὁ Θεὸς τὸν πόθο μας θὲ νὰ τὸν εὐλογήσει!» (IV:61-65). In the Protevangelium an angel appears to Anna, and then two messengers come and report to her that an angel has appeared to Ioachim. When Ioachim arrives no words are credited to him. Instead Anna says to him, Νῦν οἶδα ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεὸς εὐλόγησέ με.[163] Sikelianos uses the same verb εὐλογέω but transfers it from Anna to Ioachim. Again he stresses the purely personal element of their situation, referring to their 'longing' for a child, in contrast to the Protevangelium, which, as already indicated, shows them as more concerned with their status in the eyes of God and among their fellow Jews.

There follows a more developed example of nature imagery: Anna, στοὺς μῆνες τοὺς ἐννιά, is a tree bending under the weight of its fruit which is finally received by the cradle (IV:66-8). Here the Protevangelium has the bare statement, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἑνάτῳ μηνὶ ἐγέννησεν Ἄννα, and later καὶ ἀνέκλινεν αὐτήν (antecedent: θῆλυ).[164]

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[160] This is evident in Anna's response to the sight of the nest: 'even the fowls of the air are fruitful before thee, O Lord' (Protevangelium 3.2).

[161] Sikelianos is clearly indebted to *Ἐρωτόκριτος* 5.791-803, where the appearance and singing of δυὸ ὄμορφα πουλιά [. . .] ποὺ ἐσμίξαν ἔτσι ὁμάδι is taken as a good omen for marriage.

[162] The companion phrase, τὴν προσευκὴ θρεμμένος, is a borrowing from the earlier narrative concerning Ioachim which Sikelianos omits. In the wilderness Ioachim said to himself, ἔσται μου ἡ εὐχὴ βρῶμα καὶ πόμα (Protevangelium 1.4).

[163] Protevangelium 4.1-4, 4.

[164] Protevangelium 5.2. One manuscript has τὴν παῖδα in place of αὐτήν, while another

In the Protevangelium a midwife tells Anna that the child is female, and the narration continues,

> καὶ εἶπεν Ἄννα Ἐμεγαλύνθη ἡ ψυχή μου ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ταύτῃ [. . .] πληρωθεισῶν δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἀπεσμήξατο Ἄννα, καὶ ἔδωκεν μασθὸν τῇ παιδί.[165]

Sikelianos keeps the reference to 'my soul' and, though his Ἡ ψυχή μου ζεῖ is more distant from the Magnificat than ἐμεγαλύνθη ἡ ψυχή μου, he seems aware of the allusion and imports from the Magnificat the idea of rejoicing,[166] though it is expressed in terms of the χαρὰν μεγάλην which the angel proclaimed to the shepherds at the time of Christ's birth[167] (IV:70-72):

> Χαρὰ μεγάλη ἐγίνηκε τῆς Ἄννας μὲς στὰ στήθη·
> τὰ μάτια της ἐσήκωσε κ' εἶπε: «Ἡ ψυχή μου ζεῖ !»
> Γλυκὸ ποτάμι μέσα της ἡ χάρη ὡσὰ νὰ χύθη,
> στὸ βρέφος τότε γύρισε καὶ τοῦ 'δωκε βυζί . . .

Notice how the reference to ritual purification[168] is replaced by the nature image of a 'sweet river' of grace flowing within Anna, which is also the milk which flows from her to the child. Such substitution of more congenial material is one of the ways in which Sikelianos eliminates the

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(preferred by James, who translates 'laid herself down') has ἑαυτήν (Tischendorf 1853: 11).

[165] Protevangelium 5.2.

[166] Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχή μου τὸν Κύριον καὶ ἠγαλλίασε τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ Θεῷ (Luke 1.47).

[167] Luke 2.10. This is a minor example of Sikelianos' tendency to displace source material to a different narrative context, a tendency which becomes more pronounced in later parts of ΠΕ.

[168] Leviticus 12.5 specifies a period of uncleanness of two weeks after the birth of a female child, followed by sixty-six days of purification. This is, perhaps, an example of the kind of detail with which the author of the Protevangelium was not familiar (see p.203 n.154). Otherwise, he would seem to imply that Anna waited eighty days before suckling the child.

Jewish ritual so important in the Protevangelium. Another is the simplification of the narrative which, in the Protevangelium, is largely driven by ritual concerns. In the passage considered above, Sikelianos presents a couple's natural longing for a child, but the evasion of ritual leaves at least one element unexplained: Ioachim's fasting during his absence from home. Similarly lacking in context are Sikelianos' reference to the six-month-old child as ταμένο τοῦ Θεοῦ (IV:77) and his statement, when she is three years old, that 'the time had come for her to enter the temple' (IV:81-2), since he has said nothing of Anna's vow, at the time her conception was foretold, to dedicate the child to the service of God 'all the days of its life'.[169] He cannot, of course, avoid Mary's life in the temple, but the images of the child dancing on the altar steps (IV:91-2) and being fed by an angel are familiar from Orthodox iconography and thus, in a sense, already Greek; though Sikelianos reduces the angel to a simile, thus distancing Mary from the supernatural (IV:103-04).[170]

When Mary approaches puberty the temple authorities are faced with a problem, and in dealing with this episode Sikelianos' simplification becomes seriously perplexing. In the Protevangelium a council of priests declares:

> Ἰδοὺ ἡ Μαρία γέγονεν δωδεκαετὴς ἐν τῷ ναῷ κυρίου· τί οὖν αὐτὴν ποιήσωμεν, μή πως μιάνῃ τὸ ἁγίασμα κυρίου;

With the onset of menstruation she would be ritually unclean two weeks out of four,[171] and could not therefore remain in the temple. The council ask the High Priest to go into the Holy of Holies and pray to discover God's will. An angel appears and instructs him how a husband is to be chosen for

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169 Protevangelium 4.1, 7.2

170 Compare Protevangelium 7.3-8.1

171 Leviticus 12.2, 5.

Mary.[172]

Apart from the selection of a husband, Sikelianos will have none of this. There is no council of priests, no Holy of Holies, no angel; and the negative aspect of Mary's development, her potentiality to pollute the temple, is replaced by something entirely positive: the first flush of youth, described in extravagant imagery of light. The High Priest, dazzled by her brilliance, but apparently realizing no more than that the girl is growing up and ought to be betrothed, immediately responds with a scheme to select a widower as her husband. To the reader unfamiliar with the background to the situation, the results of Sikelianos' distortion and extreme condensation of the narrative at this point must appear rather odd (IV:129-32):

> Στὰ χρόνια της τὰ δώδεκα, σὰν ξάστραψε ἡ λαμπρότη,
> ὁ ἀρχιερέας, τὴ νιότη της, ὡς θάμβωσε νὰ ἰδεῖ,
> διατάζει: «Οἱ χηρευάμενοι, σ' ἐμένα ἂς ἔρτουν πρῶτοι
> κι ἂς ἀκουμπάει καθένας τους, μπροστά μου, σὲ ραβδί!»

In the selection of Joseph and in his reluctance to accept Mary, Sikelianos is closely dependent on the Protevangelium, but in the High Priest's reply he deviates widely. In the Protevangelium the High Priest browbeats Joseph into acceptance, threatening him with the dire things God did to various OT characters 'because of their gainsaying'. What we get in Sikelianos is more imagery of light: the dove which emerged from Joseph's rod and settled on his head was a φωτεινὸ σημάδι, God's meaning is φανερό and Joseph should expel from his mind 'the darkness of anxiety' (IV:141-4). In both the Protevangelium and «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο» Joseph now takes Mary to his house and leaves her there while he goes away to 'build a building' (IV:160), or 'buildings'.[173]

It does not appear that the author of the Protevangelium imagined

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[172] Protevangelium 8.2-3.

[173] ΠΕ, IV:133-60; Protevangelium 9.1-2.

either that Joseph was poor or that Mary was left entirely alone and unattended in his house. This is, however, the situation imagined by Sikelianos. The house is πιὸ φτωχικιά than even the φτωχόσπιτα they pass on the way to it (IV:146-9), and there, when Joseph has gone, μένει μονάχη ἡ Μαριάμ (IV:161). The house is surrounded by mountains and, more immediately, by gardens (IV:148-9). In this rural retreat which he has created for the Virgin, Sikelianos himself seems suddenly more at home. The Virgin is now removed from the constraints of life in the temple and from her involvement in Jewish law and ritual which Sikelianos has done his best to minimize. She is in effect liberated from the text of the Protevangelium. It is not that Sikelianos makes no further use of the source, but the borrowings become fewer, and what he borrows is often displaced or distorted, or used to provide colourful detail rather than narrative structure. From this point to the end of Part VII, the lyrical imagination is paramount.

The Virgin of «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο» spends two years (IV:238) alone in the house and its gardens, and Sikelianos devotes more than a hundred lines (IV:161-268) to her solitary idyll, describing the awakening of her senses to the sights and sounds around her, and the deep peace within her. In the middle of this passage the Protevangelium surfaces again for a moment. Mary is in the garden drawing water (IV:215-16):

> τοῦ κήπου μέσ' ἀπ' τὸ βαθὺ δροσιστικὸ πηγάδι
> τραβάει σιγά, στὸ ξέφωτο πεζούλι, τὸ νερό.

In the Protevangelium this is the moment of the Annunciation:

> καὶ ἔλαβεν τὴν κάλπην καὶ ἐξῆλθεν γεμίσαι ὕδωρ· καὶ ἰδοὺ φωνὴ λέγουσα Χαῖρε κεχαριτωμένη.[174]

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[174] Protevangelium 11.1.

Sikelianos, however, does not proceed immediately to the Annunciation. What Mary experienced by the well seems to be a moment of illumination, of self-revelation (IV:217-18). In the ensuing lines she is compared to Rebecca at the well when she encountered Abraham's servant who had come in search of a wife for his master's son Isaac, and then to 'the Shulamite', the Bride of the Song of Songs.[175] Traditional Christian exegesis treats Rebecca and the Shulamite as types of the Virgin Mary. Here, though, the erotic implications in both cases anticipate Sikelianos' transformation of the Annunciation into an encounter of lovers.

The juxtaposition of references to Christ and πάνοπλος Ἔρωτας in the opening lines of ΠΕ [176] anticipates the intrusion of Eros into the story of the Panagia. A passage about Eros (IV:269-312), beginning,

Ὁ Ἀρματωμένος Ἔρωτας θὲ νά 'ρτει, θὰ ξανάρτει,

acts as a prelude to Sikelianos' rewriting of the Annunciation. Eros will come as a force of nature, ἀπ' τὴν καρδιὰ τῆς ἄνοιξης (IV:272), and he will come ἀπ' τοὺς βαθύτερους ποὺ βρίσκονται οὐρανούς (IV:276). The superlative excludes the possibility of a deeper, Christian heaven.[177] 'He will come, he will come again' is suggestive of Christ who, according to Christian belief, came first in the Incarnation and will come again at the end of time to judge the world. Furthermore, the coming of

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[175] Genesis 24.32-49; Song of Songs 6.13. It may have occurred to Sikelianos that, in associating the Annunciation with Mary's going out to draw water, the author of the Protevangelium was deliberately creating a parallel with Rebecca. As Abraham's servant did not reveal the purpose of his visit until he was inside Rebecca's father's house, so, in the Protevangelium (11.3), after the greeting the angel does not deliver the substance of his message until Mary has gone back into the house. (Her going out for water and then re-entering the house has no basis in the Gospels.)

[176] See p.201.

[177] Note that in the Akathistos Hymn (and in other liturgical texts, though not in Luke or the Protevangelium) the angel of the Annunciation comes, explicitly, 'from heaven' (οὐρανόθεν ἐπέμφθη, *oikos* 1)

Eros is associated with τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου (IV:275). Though this phrase has become part of the language, it has done so because of its NT use in reference to the appearance of Christ in the world, and it is, therefore, highly appropriate in the context of the Annunciation.[178]

That Sikelianos means to associate the coming of Eros with the coming of Christ, is confirmed a few lines later (IV:301-04):

> Ὁ Ἀρματωμένος Ἔρωτας, γιὰ μαρμαρένιο ἁλώνι
> τὴ γῆν ἀκέρια ὡς λόγιασε, τὸ Θάνατο πατεῖ·
> μ' ὅλα τ' ἀστέρια του, γυμνὲς ρομφαῖες, τὴνε κυκλώνει,
> κ' ἡ πύλη τῆς Παράδεισος φαντάζει ὁλανοιχτή . . .

The expression τὸ Θάνατο πατεῖ is a clear appropriation of the language of the Easter liturgy already cited in connection with Palamas.[179] Eros is also located within the Greek folk tradition through the μαρμαρένιο ἁλώνι, where Digenis wrestles with Charos. In using the word ρομφαῖες Sikelianos alludes to the φλογινὴν ῥομφαίαν, set up 'to guard the way to the tree of life' when Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise.[180] With the reference to the gate of Paradise being ὁλανοιχτή, Sikelianos locates Eros within another area of Christian symbolism associated with the Incarnation. In the opening words of the first *oikos* of Romanos' Kontakion No.1, 'On the Nativity I', τὴν Ἐδὲμ Βηθλεὲμ ἤνοιξε.[181] In Genesis Adam and Eve were expelled and Paradise closed following an act of disobedience through which they acquired sexual knowledge. In associating

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[178] Ὅτε δὲ ἦλθε τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός (Galatians 4.4).

[179] See pp.129-30.

[180] Genesis 3.24.

[181] This *oikos* is well known, as it is still sung in the Great Vespers of Christmas. There are also a number of references to Mary as the agent who opens Paradise in the Akathistos Hymn and Canon: Παραδείσου θυρῶν ἀνοικτήριον (Akathistos Hymn, *oikos* 7); δι' ἧς ἠνοίχθη Παράδεισος (*ibid. oikos* 15); Ἐδὲμ ἀνοίξασα τὴν κεκλεισμένην (Akathistos Canon, Ode 9, *troparion* 2).

the advent of Eros with the reopening of Paradise. Sikelianos not only identifies Eros with Christ, but also challenges the Christian repression of sexuality.

Having firmly established Eros in a linguistic context which belongs to Christ— he comes from heaven in 'the fullness of time' (*AV*), he treads on death, and the gate of Paradise is open— Sikelianos now turns to Mary and, as it were, reverses the process, placing her in a pagan context (IV:305-06):

> Στὸν κεραυνό του ἡ Μαριὰμ, ἀκέρια, ὡς ἡ Σεμέλη,
> θὰ σωριαστεῖ ἢ ὁλάκερο θὲ νὰ τόνε δεχτεῖ;

Zeus, disguised as a mortal, had been Semele's lover. In the sixth month of her pregnancy Semele tricked him into revealing his identity. He came to her with thunder and lightning καὶ κεραυνὸν ἵησιν. Semele died of fright and/or was consumed by fire (with θὰ σωριαστεῖ Sikelianos manages to suggest both), though the unborn Dionysus was saved.[182] Despite the 'thunderbolt', Sikelianos' του and τόνε appear to denote Eros, since Zeus is not named. The next lines (IV:307-08) are indeed about Eros, but do not necessarily propose any specific relationship between him and Mary:

> Ὁ Ἁρματωμένος Ἔρωτας, τὰ νέα ποθώντας μέλη,
> τεράστια βίγλα γύρα τους μερόνυχτα κρατεῖ.

It is not *her* young limbs, but young limbs in general which are the object of Eros' longing, and over which he keeps watch, as, earlier, he is said to keep watch 'like a field guard over the whole of nature with mystic tenderness' (IV:293-4). It is only in the comparison with Semele that Sikelianos seems to propose any immediate connection between Eros and

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[182] Apollodorus 4.3; Diodorus Siculus 4.2.2-3.

Mary. Otherwise, Eros' role in this passage is that of a presiding deity who remains in the background without participating in the action. The poet asks whether Mary will be 'reduced to a heap [of ashes]' by the power of Eros, or will accept him 'entire'. This could be seen as suggesting a paganizing of the Christian myth so as to bring Eros into direct relation with Mary in a divine-human coupling like that of Zeus with Semele. However, in view of what follows, it would, I think, be better to see Mary's putative acceptance of Eros as a metaphor for submission to the power of desire (personified by Eros) rather than implying her acceptance of Eros himself as a lover.

Who, then, is 'the God', of the next stanza (IV:309-12), who is 'to come [as] Bridegroom' and whom Mary unwittingly summons with her every breath?

Κι Αὐτή, ὡς ἡ γῆ τοῦ Χαναὰν πού ἀνθὸς τὴ ζώνει θεῖος,
πού μ' ὅλες τὶς ἀνάπνοιες της ἀνέγνωρα καλεῖ
νά 'ρθει μιὰ νύχτα μοναχὰ κρυφὰ ὁ Θεός, Νυμφίος,
ποιὰ ζώνη τώρα ζώνεται καὶ ποιὰ φορεῖ στολή;

The obvious answer is that this 'God' is Eros (the passage began with the statement that Eros 'will come, will come again'), but there are reasons for preferring a different interpretation. After the comparison with Semele, Sikelianos returns the Panagia to the realm of Christian imagery. The simile ὡς ἡ γῆ τοῦ Χαναάν is derived from the Akathistos Hymn, in which the Virgin is addressed as ἡ Γῆ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας.[183] Νυμφίος is associated directly and indirectly with Christ: directly in the words of Christ himself and of John the Baptist;[184] and indirectly in the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. This is one of a series of parables which

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183 See p.88.

184 Christ, asked why his disciples do not fast, replies, 'Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?' (Matthew 9.14-15); and John the Baptist compares his relation to Christ to that of the bridegroom's friend to the bridegroom (John 3.27-30).

illustrate the need for watchfulness because 'the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect'.[185] Mary calls on God to come at night, like the bridegroom of the parable:

> μέσης δὲ νυκτὸς κραυγὴ γέγονεν· ἰδοὺ ὁ νυμφίος ἔρχεται.[186]

It would make no sense to see Sikelianos' ὁ Θεός, Νυμφίος as Christ, except in terms of the unity of Father and Son in the Trinity; for a careful reading of the succeeding passage, in which Sikelianos rewrites the Annunciation (IV:313-60), will indicate that this God who comes as Bridegroom is God the Father, the Jahweh of the OT. The remaining ambiguities suggest that Sikelianos drew back from making this plain.

The comparison with Semele is the key to understanding the Annunciation of «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο». In «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ 'Ανθρώπου» Sikelianos treated the Annunciation as a sexual encounter between the Panagia and the Archangel in which Mary did not 'flee the love of God to save her virginity'.[187] The ambiguity involved in naming her lover as both 'Αρχάγγελος and Θεός is resolved in «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο», where the one who comes to Mary is not the Archangel, but the ταμένος τοῦ 'Ισραήλ who comes '*like* an Archangel walking on earth', holding the lily associated (in iconography) with Gabriel (IV:321-4):

> Καὶ νά· ὁ ταμένος τοῦ 'Ισραήλ, ἀπ' τὴν κρυφή του Μοίρα
> σταλμένος, σὰν 'Αρχάγγελος τὴ γὴν ὁποὺ πατεῖ.
> . . . . . .
> περνᾶ, καὶ μὲς στὴ φούχτα του κρίνο ἀψηλὸ κρατεῖ ! . . .

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185 Matthew 24.44.

186 Matthew 25.6. Mary also calls on him to come 'secretly' (κρυφά), as Zeus came to Semele, not only in the sense of being disguised, but explicitly in Apollodorus 4.3: Σεμέλης δὲ Ζεὺς ἐρασθεὶς "Ηρας κρύφα συνευνάζεται.

187 See p.166.

Clearly there is a deliberate echo here of the opening of the Lucan Annunciation:

> Ἐν δὲ τῷ μηνὶ τῷ ἕκτῳ ἀπεστάλη ὁ ἄγγελος Γαβριὴλ ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰς πόλιν τῆς Γαλιλαίας.[188]

Sikelianos uses the same passive verb (though in uncompounded form), but, whereas, in Luke, Gabriel 'was sent by God' (my translation), in Sikelianos the one who comes is 'sent by his secret Fate'. The introduction of Fate is not merely a minor paganizing touch, since some substitution for 'sent by God' is necessary if we are to see ὁ ταμένος not as a messenger of God but as God himself. (In Greek mythology even the gods are sometimes subject to Fate.)

The phrase ὁ ταμένος τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (IV:321), though not Biblical, is obviously within the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Perhaps the closest Biblical equivalent is ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, used more than twenty times in Isaiah (often without the second article) as a name of God. At first sight ὁ ταμένος, meaning 'the one who has been dedicated' (implicitly by a solemn vow), seems unlikely as an epithet of God, but in the Jewish conception of a covenantal relationship between God and Israel, God is bound to his people by his own vows or promises. One key covenantal text brings us fairly close to Sikelianos' expression. God says to Moses, 'Write these words',

> ἐπὶ γὰρ τῶν λόγων τούτων τέθειμαί σοι διαθήκην καὶ τῷ Ἰσραήλ.[189]

While Israelites might be dedicated to God (Sikelianos speaks of the infant Mary as ταμένο τοῦ Θεοῦ),[190] only God could properly be spoken of as

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188 Luke 1.26.

189 Exodus 34.27.

190 See p.208.

'dedicated to Israel'.

A further strong indication of Sikelianos' intention to present the Annunciation as an encounter between Mary and God is found in IV:325-8:

> 'Αργά, ὡς ἐκοίτα ἡ Μαριάμ, ξάφνου θαρρεῖ κ' ἐπέρνα
> στὸ μεσανύχτι ἀνάμεσα μιὰ λάμψη βιαστική,
> καθὼς διανεύει γρήγορο χρυσόψαρο σὲ στέρνα,
> ἡ παντοδύναμη θωριὰ τοῦ Κύριου μυστική.

While this might remind us of Semele seeing Zeus in his true form (but without the disastrous consequences), there are clear echoes here of an equally or even more momentous encounter, between God and Moses. Moses wants God to show himself to him, and God tells Moses he will 'pass by' (compare Sikelianos' ἐπέρνα):[191]

> ἐγὼ παρελεύσομαι πρότερός σου τῇ δόξᾳ μου.[192]

Τῇ δόξᾳ may be reflected in Sikelianos' phrase ἀνάμεσα μιὰ λάμψη βιαστική, while his reference to 'the Lord's secret and all-powerful countenance' suggests the face of God which must be concealed from Moses because of its terrible power:

> οὐ δυνήσῃ ἰδεῖν τὸ πρόσωπόν μου· οὐ γὰρ μὴ ἰδῇ ἄνθρωπος
> τὸ πρόσωπόν μου καὶ ζήσεται.[193]

Κύριος is prominent in this passage as a name of God,[194] and in Sikelianos it must surely be understood in its OT sense.

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[191] Note that ἐπέρνα in line 325 repeats περνᾶ of line 324 and thus tends to confirm the identitification of the Κύριος with the ταμένος.

[192] Exodus 33.18-19. Compare 33.22 where the same verb is used twice. This passage is all in the future tense, anticipating Moses' appointment with God on Sinai for the renewal of the Covenant in the terms quoted above. See also p.350 below.

[193] Exodus 33.20.

[194] Exodus 34.17, 19, 21.

No further names are used of the one who comes to Mary. The next four stanzas are devoted to the signs of his approach and Mary's physical response as she anticipates his arrival, including a sudden warmth in her breasts and an unbearable pulse beating in her inner parts (σπλάχνο) (IV:341-4). When he finally 'stands before her' (IV:345),[195] the erotic nature of her response becomes more explicit: 'all her desire flares up' (IV:348). Her desire is 'speechless' (βουβή), and in fact Sikelianos dispenses with all the dialogue of the Lucan Annunciation (already much abbreviated in the Protevangelium) except for the one word of greeting, Χαῖρε. Mary's divine visitor puts his hands on her shoulders, looks into her eyes and utters the Χαῖρε. Together, in an image evocative of folk-poetry, they are 'like two cypresses entwined, which loudly groan, when a strong wind blows at night' (IV:353-6); and the encounter ends with a μέγα φιλί [. . .] καὶ μέγας χωρισμός (IV:360). Here Sikelianos seems aware of the ending of the Lucan Annunciation (καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτῆς ὁ ἄγγελος),[196] but he transforms the simple departure into a lover's 'parting', as he makes the Χαῖρε into an intimate greeting through its association with physical contact.

The Annunciation of «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο» is really no Annunciation at all: no message is brought, there is nothing about conception by supernatural means;[197] and as in «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ

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[195] The neutral phrase, μπροστά της στέκει is close to the way in which the Protevangelium describes Gabriel's appearance to Mary: καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου ἔστη ἐνώπιον αὐτῆς (Protevangelium 11.2). It is the only point of contact between Sikelianos' Annunciation and material in the Protevangelium not derived from Luke.

[196] Luke 1.38.

[197] Nevertheless, it may be argued that Sikelianos appropriates elements of the vocabulary of supernatural conception and uses them for different purposes. In Luke 1.35 the angel explains to Mary, Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι. A distorted reflection of this language may be seen in the παντοδύναμη θωριὰ τοῦ Κύριου μυστικὴ (IV:328) which Mary glimpses, and the μυστικὴ φοβέρα τ' Ἁγίου Θεοῦ (IV:317-18) which 'arms her body'.

'Ανθρώπου» Mary's virginity is not preserved. Instead, Sikelianos suggests an almost wordless divine-human coupling in which Mary is impregnated. «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο» ends with the χωρισμός, and at the beginning of Part V, «Ἡ Φυγή», Mary is embroidering a cover for a cradle (V:5-8) and knows she is to be a mother (V:15).

The idea that God himself came to Mary, as Zeus to Semele, may be related to a question which Mary asks in the Protevangelium. There, the angel tells her that she has 'found favour with the Lord of all things' and that she will 'conceive of his will',

> ἡ δὲ ἀκούσασα διεκρίθη ἐν ἑαυτῇ λέγουσα Εἰ ἐγὼ συλλήψομαι ἀπὸ κυρίου θεοῦ ζῶντος, καὶ γεννήσω ὡς πᾶσα γυνὴ γεννᾷ;

'Not so,' the angel replies, and continues in words drawn from the Lucan account, 'for a power of the Lord shall overshadow thee'.[198] The misunderstanding involved in Mary's question becomes for Sikelianos the basis for his rewriting of the Annunciation as a sexual encounter between Mary and God. Sikelianos attempts to present Jesus as the son of the God of the OT in the same way as Dionysus is the son of Zeus, sired by God himself upon a human mother.

While I am convinced that this bold distortion of Christian narrative and theology underlies this Sikelianic Annunciation, it must be admitted that it is not clearly articulated. Trypanis is probably not alone in seeing here 'the Annunciation of the Virgin by a fully armed Eros', and in finding it 'not in the best of taste'.[199] The relation between the Annunciation and the previous passage dealing with 'Αρματωμένος "Ερως is not entirely clear. It is possible that these two passages represent different paganizing conceptions of the Annunciation which have not been satisfactorily

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[198] Protevangelium 11.2, and see preceding note.

[199] Trypanis 1981: 674.

integrated, the first, which is not fully worked through, involving Eros as Mary's visitant, and the second putting the Judaeo-Christian God in a role compatible with that of Zeus in relation to Semele.[200]

After the Annunciation there are only the occasional hints of syncretism in ΠΕ. There is no space for detailed considerations of Parts V-VII of the poem which continue the story of the Panagia, interesting though they are in their appropriations of the language of the Protevangelium and of Matthew and Luke. I want only to draw attention to the extraordinary distortions of the very familiar Nativity stories which they contain, evident even in the misleading nature of the titles of each of these three parts.

«Ἡ Φυγή», the title of Part V, inevitably suggests the Flight into Egypt of Matthew 2.13-14, which follows the birth of Christ. Sikelianos' 'Flight' is not, however, an escape from Herod but a means of preventing Mary's pregnancy being discovered (V:114-20). This is a major deviation from the Protevangelium, where the priests become aware of Mary's condition and subject both Mary and Joseph to a ritual testing, by which their innocence is proved. They have, therefore, no reason whatever to flee, and their subsequent departure is prompted, as in Luke, by a decree of Augustus which obliges them to go to Bethlehem to 'be recorded'.[201] Sikelianos' introduction of the 'Flight' is, then, a further evasion of Jewish ritual. But it is also an opportunity: the account of the 'Flight' occupies almost 200 lines (V:121-316), and throughout the journey Mary and Joseph are alone in the world of nature, or, in poetic terms, in the familiar world of Sikelianic nature imagery. At the end of «Ἡ Φυγή» they stop to rest before entering a village (V:313-16). This village is evidently Bethlehem.

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[200] Xydis' interpretation (1973: 140) assumes two separate visits: the first by Eros; the second— and this would be difficult to defend— 'the Annunciation of the Panagia by Gabriel'.

[201] Protevangelium 15.1-17.2.

where they are already ensconced in the 'inn' at the beginning of Part VI.

The title of Part VI, «Στὸν Ξενώνα τῆς Βηθλεέμ», suggests the site of the Nativity, although here, *pace* Luke, there *is* 'room for them in the inn'.[202] Furthermore, Mary tells the innkeeper that they are only passing through Bethlehem on the way to 'another village' where they 'have been engaged' to work (VI:49-50);[203] and early the next morning they leave the inn, the child as yet unborn (VI:93-108). The hasty departure from the inn, at or before dawn, recalls the precipitate departure recorded by Matthew, when, after being warned about Herod in the second dream, Joseph 'rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt'.[204]

The garrulous innkeeper is one of Sikelianos' embellishments of the story, a stock character used as a crude narrative device to introduce certain pieces of information (VI:18-40). He tells Mary and Joseph of a new star that has appeared, and of pronouncements by the Roman Sibyls and the Delphic oracle, quoting the latter as related to him by 'many travellers' (VI:25-27).[205] The innkeeper also informs them of what Luke calls the δόγμα of Caesar Augustus 'that all the world should be enrolled'.[206] This is indeed a strange distortion of the narrative. The

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[202] Luke 2.7 (*AV*). Sikelianos transposes this detail to a much later incident (see p.225).

[203] Mary also says that Joseph is her father (VI:51). The attribution of such subterfuge, involving actual falsehood, to Mary is potentially offensive to devout readers. The misrepresentation of their relationship is based, in part, on Joseph's unresoved quandary in the Protevangelium (17.1): 'How shall I record her? as my wife? *nay*, I am ashamed. Or as my daughter?' The transformation of Joseph's question into Mary's false statement is consistent with Sikelianos' general strategy in which Joseph's role as an independent agent determining the course of events is severely limited, and Mary's enhanced.

[204] Matthew 2.14.

[205] Sikelianos is obviously thinking of the early Christian reinterpretations of, and blatant interpolations in, recorded pagan oracles, a tradition which suits his own syncretistic concerns.

[206] Here Sikelianos follows Luke 2.1 in preference to Protevangelium 17.1, which, rather strangely, restricts the application of the imperial decree to Bethlehem. He makes Luke's

'decree', which in Luke and the Protevangelium is the reason for Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, is, for Sikelianos, something they hear of by chance when they happen to be passing through Bethlehem, and which becomes the reason for their sudden departure.

The innkeeper warns them of the dire consequences of avoiding the census in terms which appear to confuse a Roman administrative procedure with the Slaughter of the Innocents carried out later by the soldiers of Herod (VI:37-40):

> Κι ἀλὶ σ' αὐτὸν ποὺ στοχαστεῖ τὸ σπλάχνο του νὰ κρύψει !
> Τἰ τέτοια πῆγε στὸ στρατὸν ὁλοῦθε διαταγή :
> Κι ἄν βρεῖ στοῦ κύκνου τὴ φωλιὰ τὸ αὐγό, νὰ τὸ συντρίψει·
> κι ὅπου δὲ φτανʼηʼ διάτα του, νὰ προλαβαίν' ἡ ὀργή !

The source for this violent threat is Matthew: the description of Herod's rage and its consequences,[207] the related warning in Joseph's dream.[208] Once again, and in a most confusing fashion, Sikelianos has transferred post-Nativity narrative elements to a pre-Nativity context.

In Part VII, «Ἡ Γέννηση», the 'Flight' is resumed after the overnight stop in Bethlehem, and Mary and Joseph are again alone in the world of nature. As already noted, despite the title, the narrative stops short, just before Christ's birth, at the moment when Mary sees in front of her the Cave (VII:68), which in the Protevangelium is the site of the Nativity. We should probably understand that this cave is not very far from Bethlehem, for in the distance the barking of dogs can still be heard (VII:66).[209]

πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην a little more specific: the διάτα extends σ' ὅσους τόπους / ἁπλώνετ' ἡ κυβέρνια του (VI:33-4).

[207] Matthew 2.16.

[208] Matthew 2.13.

[209] In «Διόνυσος ἐπὶ λίκνῳ» Sikelianos alludes to these dogs and other details from «Ἡ Γέννηση» (see p.244-5 n.271).

The story of the Annunciation and of the events surrounding the Nativity is so well known that Sikelianos's version must strike almost all his readers as very odd, not to say baffling. There is no obvious rationale for Sikelianos' reworking of the narrative sequence or his introduction of invented episodes. Faulty recollection of the sources is not a possible explanation. Quite apart from the familiarity of the story, there can be no doubt that Sikelianos consulted the text of the Protevangelium (if not the Gospels) in composing Parts IV-VII of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, and the changes must be seen as conscious and deliberate. The transposition of the Flight and the threat of soldiers slaughtering young children to a pre-Nativity context (and making those soldiers Roman rather than Herod's) suggests that Sikelianos intended to exclude from his 'Fifth Gospel' the Magi and everything connected with them. The visit of the Magi is inextricably bound up with the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy. They come asking, 'Where is he who has been born King of the Jews?', and it is this question which arouses Herod's suspicious interest and leads to the Slaughter of the Innocents and the Flight into Egypt. Clearly the 'King of the Jews' could have no part in «Τὰ Χριστούγεννα τῶν Ἑλλήνων», as «Ἡ Γέννησῃ» was called when first published in 1934.

There are further instances of the suppression of Jewish material in the parts of ΠΕ which retell incidents from the life of Christ. These parts of the poem are discussed in the next section, in which Sikelianos' treatment of Christ and the Gospel texts, particularly in Part X, «Μαγδαληνή», is contrasted with his approach in the later and more fully achieved poem, «Ἄγραφον».

3.6 Christ in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* and «Ἄγραφον»

The first eighty lines of «Ὁ Δωδεκαετής», Part VIII of ΠΕ, are based on a number of incidents in the childhood of Jesus (but before the age of twelve), which are recounted in the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas.[210] In Sikelianos' handling of these stories one sees tendencies already familiar from earlier Parts of the poem, such as the evasion of issues of Jewish law and Christian theology, and syncretism.

Mary, for example, contemplating the child thinks to herself, κ' εἶναι [. . .] πατέρας του, μονάχα ὁ οὐρανός (VIII:28). This is a long way from 'the only-begotten Son of God' of Trinitarian theology, and ὁ οὐρανός even suggests the pagan god Uranus, father of the Titans.[211] Syncretism is also evident in the comparison of the child Jesus with the 'young Apollo' (VII:65).

When Sikelianos turns to the clay birds which Jesus made and then commanded to fly away, he alters the whole framework of the story. In Thomas the incident takes place on a Sabbath, and the story hinges on the anger of a bystander who, observing the child engaged in an activity which pollutes the Sabbath, fetches Joseph to reprimand his son.[212] This aspect is entirely overlooked by Sikelianos, so that Joseph seems to be moved by nothing more than a father's annoyance at finding his child playing in the mud (VIII:37-44). Nor does Sikelianos give any hint of the child's anger and its destructive and sometimes fatal effects which are such a striking feature of the stories in Thomas. Instead of the wilful and uncontrollable divine prodigy of Thomas, Sikelianos offers a sanitized image of a loving and obedient son.

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[210] Tischendorf 1853: 134-55.

[211] An implication consistent with ἐσὲ, Τιτάνα / στὸ Σταυρό in «Ἀντρίκειο Βάφτισμα» (see p.247).

[212] Thomas 2.1-5 (Greek A), 2.1-2 (Greek B).

The bulk of Part VIII (VIII:81-312) concerns the Twelve-year-old of the title. It is Sikelianos' much-amplified retelling of the story of Jesus' separation from his parents during a visit to Jerusalem and his rediscovery, three days later, in the temple. The story occurs in Thomas as well as Luke, and it is clear that Sikelianos is aware of both sources.[213] He again transposes details as in earlier Parts of the poem. When the family first arrive in Jerusalem they find nowhere to stay (VIII:148):

μὰ εἶναι πιασμένα τὰ κελιά, κ' εἶναι γεμάτ' ἡ αὐλή.

This is obviously borrowed from Luke's Nativity story: οὐκ ἦν αὐτοῖς τόπος ἐν τῷ καταλύματι.[214]

All that remains of the projected narrative of the ministry, Passion and Resurrection of Jesus are accounts of two incidents; both, significantly, concern Jesus' relations with women, and both also figure in the work of Palamas.[215] The first, «Ὁ Ἰησοῦς στὴ Βηθανία» (Part IX) is based on the story of Martha 'distracted by much serving' and her sister, Mary, who chose the 'good portion' and 'sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching'.[216] After the first two stanzas of narrative introduction, encapsulating the source text, Jesus ceases to be the focus of the poem. The image of Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus proves no more than a springboard for the poet's imagination. Though in the third person, the remaining stanzas view the scene from the perspective of Mary. The setting is a garden, and Jesus seems to blend with the surroundings. His voice seems to come from the trees and his words fall on Mary's head like apple blossom (IX:13-16). Here, and in other lines, there are distant echoes of the Song of Songs. The diffuse erotic atmosphere is momentarily focused in

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213 Luke 2.41-52; Thomas 19.1-5 (Greek A).

214 Luke 2.7.

215 See pp.47-8, 125.

216 Luke 10.38-42.

the secret speech of Mary's soul, in which she rejects τὰ ὥρια στολίδια τὰ χρυσά, τοῦ γάμου τὰ πετράδια in favour of τοῦ Λόγου Του [. . .] ἡ εὐφραντικὴ βροχή, which 'washed' her (IX:41-44).

The background here is Biblical. Sikelianos alludes to OT sayings about wisdom being 'better than gold' and 'more precious than jewels',[217] and to the words of Moses in the second of the nine Biblical Odes of the Greek Church:

> καταβήτω ὡς δρόσος τὰ ῥήματά μου, ὡσεὶ ὄμβρος ἐπ' ἄγρωστιν καὶ ὡσεὶ νιφετὸς ἐπὶ χόρτον.[218]

Sikelianos subverts these similes, making the rain something which falls on an individual woman and thus suggesting a link between Mary and Danae, to whom Zeus came in the form of a golden shower which impregnated her. The 'rain' of Jesus' speech is also fecundating, if only metaphorically, for, in a more distant echo of Moses' words, Mary says (IX:48):

ἄνθια ὁ βαθιὸς τοῦ κόρφου μου ξανοίγει δροσισμός!

The eroticization of Jesus' relationship with a woman is more obvious and more central in Part X, «Μαγδαληνή», which has a more complex and interesting relationship with its Gospel sources. It is divided into three parts. The first, in a generic first person plural and rich in references to nature, evokes the ambience of nightfall (X:1-24); the second is a third-person narrative (X:25-60); and the third a prayer addressed by the poet to Mary Magdalene (X:61-4).[219] 'Jesus and his disciples' are first mentioned at the end of the first part, 'among the crowd [. . .] in the dark' (X:21-4). This sudden appearance seems intended to lead into the scene (a

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217 Proverbs 3.14-15.Compare 8.10-11, 16.16 and Job 28.15-17.

218 Deuteronomy 32.2

219 This last stanza is the only example in ΠΕ of a detached 'acclamation' comparable to those of the emperor addressed to the Virgin in Palamas' *Φλογέρα*.

busy street) with which the narrative second part opens (X:25-6). This narrative concerns the anointing of Jesus with *myron*[220] by a woman while he was eating as a guest in a house. It is necessary to speak of this topos in such basic terms in order to avoid going beyond what is common to Sikelianos' text and the related accounts in the four Gospels. As described by Luke, the incident is usually known as 'The Sinful Woman' or 'The Woman who was a Sinner'; while the comparable incidents in the other three Gospels are all known as 'The Anointing at Bethany' (although John's version differs substantially from those of Matthew and Mark).

In the naming of two of the principal *dramatis personae* in the anointing, Sikelianos does not follow any of the Gospel accounts. First, he calls the woman who anoints Jesus 'Magdalene'. Xydis remarks somewhat vaguely that 'the poet uses the myrophore Magdalene as a symbol',[221] implying perhaps that Sikelianos made a creative and imaginative choice, based on the thematic correspondence between the actual anointing of the living Christ and the intended anointing of the dead Christ on the morning of the Resurrection. However, it is more likely that Sikelianos was simply following the Western tradition which, since the early medieval period, has identified Mary Magdalene with Luke's 'woman of the city who was a sinner',[222] regarding both, independently but with no scriptural authority, as prostitutes; and either or both are sometimes further identified with Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, since it is she who performs the anointing in the comparable Johannine passage. The Orthodox Church has never officially accepted these identifications,[223] but Sikelianos

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220 There seems to be no satisfactory English equivalent of μύρον. 'Myrrh' is certainly misleading, and 'ointment' (*AV* and *RSV*) sounds too sticky to be poured. It probably denotes an 'aromatic oil', but this is too cumbersome an expression and I propose simply to transliterate and refer to *myron*.

221 Xydis 1973: 147.

222 In Matthew and Mark, it is simply 'a woman' who enters the house to anoint Jesus.

223 Orthodoxy does, however, regard the 'sinful woman' as a prostitute. She is repeatedly

appears to accept all of them, including perhaps the identification of Magdalene with Mary of Bethany, since he uses two details which are found only in John.

When John's Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus' feet, the perfume fills the whole house:

> ἡ δὲ οἰκία ἐπληρώθη ἐκ τῆς ὀσμῆς τοῦ μύρου.[224]

Sikelianos makes oblique use of this idea as a simile (X:40-42), where he speaks of Magdalene's deep sobbing pouring out into the night,

> σὰν τοῦτος ὁποὺ γιόμισεν ὁλάκερο τὸ δῶμα,
> κύμα, στὸ κύμα π' ἄπλωνεν ἀπὸ τὴν εὐωδιά.

All the Gospels except Luke include a protest against the waste of the precious ointment, on the grounds that it could have been sold for the benefit of the poor, but Sikelianos follows John in putting the words into the mouth of Judas, and in presenting them as a question.[225]

While Sikelianos' introduction of Magdalene into the story of the anointing is hardly surprising or original, his identification of Jesus' host as 'the tax collector' (τελώνης) certainly is. In Matthew and Mark the anointing takes place 'at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper'; in Luke in the house of 'one of the Pharisees' (no town is mentioned); and in John at the house of Lazarus in Bethany. There is only one Gospel incident in which Jesus eats in the house of a tax collector (although he is often spoken of as eating *with* tax collectors). The tax collector in question was Levi, or

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called πόρνη in Orthros for Wednesday in Holy Week.

[224] John 12.3.

[225] Compare X:45-8 with John 12.4-5. In Matthew 26.8-9 the objection is voiced by 'the disciples' and in Mark 14.4-5 by 'some [persons]' (τινες). Xydis, who does not take John's account into consideration at all, sees the attribution of the words to Judas as one of the 'transpositions [. . .] which the poet makes' and which 'give the poem a free and easy simplicity' (1973:147-8).

Matthew, one of the twelve disciples. In Mark's account of this incident, 'tax collectors' and 'sinners' are associated: the phrase τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοί is repeated three times, twice in the mouths of Scribes and Pharisees.[226] In Luke, the woman who anoints Jesus is a 'sinner' (ἁμαρτωλός), and the anointing takes place in the house of a Pharisee. Apart from the circumstantial similarity (Jesus and his disciples eating as invited guests in a house) there is also a thematic correspondence between the dialogue in Levi's house and the dialogue of Jesus with his host, the Pharisee, in Luke's account of the Anointing.[227]

I do not think that Sikelianos' substitution of the tax collector for the Pharisee should be seen as a mistake arising from faulty recollection of the sources, but rather— with the justification of the textual parallels— as a part of a deliberate strategy of suppression of the Jewish context of Jesus' life to facilitate the Hellenization of the story. While all societies have tax collectors— and τελώνης is still current Greek for 'customs officer'— the Pharisee is an exclusively Jewish figure. It is clear from earlier parts of ΠΕ that to achieve his objective Sikelianos is prepared to make arbitrary changes to the content and structure of the Biblical and Apocryphal narratives.

In some cases Sikelianos' blending of details from different Gospel passages are imaginatively effective; in others they result in incoherence. When Judas protests about the waste of the *myron*, he does so 'as though a

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[226] Mark 2.14-17. This pairing is found in other Gospel passages: Matthew 11.19, Luke 15.21, and Luke 7.34 (where it immediately precedes Jesus' invitation to the house of the Pharisee). At Matthew 21.31 tax collectors are paired with 'harlots' (οἱ τελῶναι καὶ αἱ πόρναι); this is relevant because of the Western tradition which regards both Magdalene and Luke's 'sinner' as prostitutes (see above). Relevant too is the pairing in the Parable of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee (Luke 8.9-14) which also interested Palamas on more than one occasion (see pp.125, 370-72).

[227] Compare Mark 2.16-17 with Luke 7.36-7 (which includes the Parable of the Two Debtors).

snake had whispered deep inside him'. The snake obviously implies Satan, and the obvious source, which connects Satan with Judas, is Luke 22.3: εἰσῆλθε δὲ σατανᾶς εἰς Ἰούδαν. These are the first words of Luke's account of the Betrayal, which is widely separated from his story of the 'sinful woman'. In Matthew and Mark, however, the Anointing at Bethany is followed immediately by the Betrayal, though their versions lack the reference to Satan. This is an effective use of Sikelianos' wide familiarity with the Gospels, but his attempted fusion of sources in the dialogue in «Μαγδαληνή» is less successful.

Although the host (the tax collector) looks 'askance' (λοξά) at Magdalene, it is only Judas who speaks, and all he says is 'Could not this have been sold for the poor?' (X:45-8). Jesus then 'gives *them* a reply' (X:52). But this reply (X:53-58) is addressed to a single person (Ἤρθ' ἀπὸ δρόμο σπίτι σου . . .), and not to Judas but to the tax collector, who, in Sikelianos' version of the story, had not spoken. This 'reply' is based on part of Jesus' reply in Luke to the unspoken thoughts of the Pharisee, represented in Sikelianos, we might say, by the sidelong look which the tax collector gives Magdalene. Lines X:57-8, where Jesus predicts that Magdalene's deed will be told throughout the world, though they are part of the same sentence as X:53-6 addressed to the host, could be construed as a reply to Judas, since they are derived from Jesus' reply (in Matthew) to the disciples' objection to the waste of *myron*. However, Sikelianos omits the connecting explanation of the spiritual value of the anointing,[228] and the extreme condensation involved in this conflation of two different exchanges from separate sources[229] results in a dialogue which is, at least on a first reading, perplexing and apparently incoherent. On a smaller scale, in compressing Luke's three comparisons between the

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[228] Matthew 16.10-13.

[229] The dialogue with the host occurs only in Luke where the issue of the waste of *myron* does not arise.

behaviour of the host and that of the woman,[230] Sikelianos (X:53-6) has mismatched 'you did not anoint my head with *myron*' with 'not for a moment has she ceased from [her] kisses on my feet', and, since there is no common element, the comparison simply does not work.

«Μαγδαληνή» is one of those parts of ΠΕ which could almost be read (in isolation) as a Christian poem. However, Sikelianos does play up all the erotic implications of the story, emphasizing the passionate and impulsive nature of Magdalene's behaviour, and there is perhaps a hint of syncretism. Magdalene 'bursts in' (ὁρμᾶ) like a wave of some great breath of May' (X:30-31); and 'wave' (κύμα) associates her with the 'wave upon wave' of perfume which comes from the *myron*. Thus, the 'great wave' which Jesus sees at his feet (X:51-2) is both the *myron* and Magdalene. And 'with what pleasure in her inward parts (σπλάχνο) she sighs', says Sikelianos, rhyming Μαγδαληνή with ήδονή (X:34-6) thus suggesting the object (sensual pleasure) of the profession tradition has attributed to her. When he speaks of the 'immeasurable loosened radiance of her hair' (X:34), he seems to invoke the image of a courtesan rather than a common prostitute; and later he refers to Jesus as 'keeping his hand in her immortal hair, in her spreading golden tresses' (X:49-50). Perhaps Sikelianos uses the word ἀθάνατα loosely, as a hyperbole of praise; perhaps he is alluding to Magdalene's immortality as a Christian saint,[231] or to her hair 'immortalized' in Western art. But he could be implying that she is one of the Immortals of the ancient pantheon, in effect an Aphrodite Anadyomene, rising from the 'waves' of myron at Jesus' feet.

Magdalene's mouth is 'glued (κολλημένο) to his feet'. This is considerably more erotic than its source in Luke: 'she has not ceased to kiss

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230 Luke 7.44-46.

231 As in the rather macabre detail in the coda, where the poet's lips kissing her relics find her hand 'still warm' (X:63-4).

my feet'.[232] And her lips are ἀναμμένα ἀπ' τὶς ἀγάπες ('lit up by [her?] loves', line 39). This admittedly ambiguous phrase suggests a highly subversive transformation of the words Jesus uses in Luke to commend the sinful woman's devotion to him: ἠγάπησε πολύ. One can posit an intermediate term, ἀγάπες πολλές, on the analogy of αἱ ἁμαρτίαι αὐτῆς αἱ πολλαί which are forgiven because she has 'loved much'.[233] The plural τὶς ἀγάπες again points to her profession. What wells up in her heart for Jesus is not ἀγάπη but ἀπάντεχο ἔρωτα (X:44). The tension between ἀγάπη and ἔρωτας would have been less if their positions had been reversed. The association of ἔρωτας with Jesus is certainly provocative;[234] but equally daring, in a context dependent on the NT, is the use of ἀγάπη— so important in Christian discourse to denote the love which God is and God's love for the world, or the 'charity' which Christians should show to others— for the 'loves' of a prostitute. Sikelianos may also be making a subversive allusion to the 'love feasts' referred to by early Christians as ἀγάπαι.[235] It is not only Magdalene's approach to Jesus which is eroticized, but also Jesus' response to her, through the detail of his hand in her hair. Furthermore, what Jesus feels, with his hand in Magdalene's luxuriant and radiant hair, is 'deep immeasurable joy'.[236] Jesus and Magdalene are thus joined in an act of love which is at least as much ἔρωτας as ἀγάπη.

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[232] Luke 7.45, adapted by Sikelianos in line 64.

[233] Luke 7.47.

[234] Independently of any possible influence in either direction, Palamas also uses ἔρωτας of the love of Magdalene and the other myrophores for Christ, and he credits them collectively with anointing Christ's feet (see pp.47-8).

[235] Jude 12 is the only NT instance of this usage. Compare Elytis 1980: 28, where the association of ἀγάπες μυστικές with Solomos' *Hymn to Liberty* parallels the association of the Easter greeting Χριστὸς 'Ανέστη with the 'first salvo' of the Revolution.

[236] At the corresponding point in Luke's narrative, Jesus merely turns towards the woman as he replies to the Pharisee, and this movement is purely deictic, accompanying the words, 'Do you see this woman?'

It is the image of Jesus and Magdalene absorbed in each other, glowing with love and joy, surrounded by uncomprehending observers, which emerges most clearly from this poem. Working very closely with the Gospel accounts of the Anointing, Sikelianos transforms the incident into something thoroughly un-Biblical, though clearly recognizable in outline and in many details. The regular stanzaic form, and the complex syntax and often convoluted word order, create a further, formal distance between the poem and its sources— and this applies to the whole of ΠΕ. In contrast, in «Ἄγραφον» we see Sikelianos pursuing an almost diametrically opposite strategy, in taking a story about Jesus from outside the Christian tradition and developing it in such a way that it sounds like a Gospel paraphrase. This is facilitated by the use of irregular verse paragraphs in unrhymed eleven-syllable lines with frequent enjambement, simple syntax and natural word order.

Sikelianos published «Ἄγραφον» in October 1941, about six months after the beginning of the Occupation, to which the poem is, at one level, a response. It is divided into two parts between the fifth and sixth paragraphs. The first part (lines 1-37a) consists of a third-person narrative with dialogue involving Jesus and the disciples. The second part, a single paragraph (lines 37b-60), is in the first and second person and there the poet is addressing Jesus. The poem thus reflects two liturgical forms, εὐαγγέλιον and εὐχή, and the two are closely related, since the 'prayer' is a response to the 'Gospel'.[237] The first part is not, however, a reworking of a Gospel incident (like «Μαγδαληνή»), nor is its source to be found in the NT Apocrypha (as is the case with other parts of ΠΕ). 'Agraphon' is a technical term used by theologians and textual critics to denote, strictly, a saying of Jesus, or, more loosely, any tradition about Jesus, which is 'not written' in the canonical books of the NT. The tradition which Sikelianos

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237 The same structure may be observed in «Μαγδαληνή», where the last quatrain is a prayer.

elaborates in «"Αγραφον» is not preserved in any extant Christian source, and can be found only in the Islamic tradition.

Keeley and Sherrard note that 'a related parable is found in the Persian poet Nizami (1141-1203) and was adapted by Goethe'.[238] Goethe's German version of a passage from Niẓāmī does indeed contain the essential elements of Sikelianos' narrative: Jesus, confronted by the foul-smelling carcass of a dog, comments on the whiteness of its teeth.[239] It seems from the text of «"Αγραφον» that Sikelianos knew Niẓāmī, probably via Goethe, but it is clear that he also drew on some translation of one of the older theological works which lie behind Niẓāmī. The oldest of these is the *Ḳut al-ḳulūb* by the tenth-century Islamic theologian al-Makkī. Hayek translates the relevant excerpt as follows:

> Passant près du cadavre d'un chien, les Compagnons de Jésus se bouchèrent le nez: «Que ce chien sent la pourriture!» dirent-ils; Jésus qui ne s'était point couvert le nez, leur dit: «Que ses dents sont blanches!»[240]

Here Jesus is accompanied by his disciples ('Compagnons'),[241] whereas in Goethe Jesus is simply the last of several otherwise unspecified individuals who comment on the carcass of the dog. The presence of the disciples, the reference to them κρατώντας / στὴ φούχτα τους τὴν πνοή (lines 14-15, compare 'se bouchèrent le nez') and the presentation of the contrasted comments on the dog as a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples are features common to Sikelianos and al-Makkī which are not found in Goethe. On the other hand, the 'crows' (κοράκια) associated with the

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[238] Keeley & Sherrard 1996: 146.

[239] Goethe 1965: 157-8.

[240] Hayek 1959: 191, translating *Ḳut al-ḳulūb* 3.61.

[241] Asin's Latin translation (1919: 365) of the corresponding passage in al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (3.100), which is derived from al-Makkī, speaks more specifically of 'Jesus [. . .] et apostoli cum eo'.

carcass in «"Αγραφον» (line 11) have their parallel in Goethe's 'vultures' ('Äser'); and Goethe's simile, 'die Zähne sind wie Perlen weiss', may be reflected in Sikelianos' double simile, τὰ δόντια.[. . .] ὡς τὸ χαλάζι, ὡσὰν τὸ κρίνο (lines 29-30). But whatever the precise route by which it reached him it is clear that Sikelianos drew this 'agraphon' from the Islamic tradition.[242]

In the Arabic sources the incident has neither general nor specific spatial location. In Goethe's version of Niẓāmī Jesus is passing a market and the dog is lying in the road in front of a gate; but Sikelianos locates the incident among the rubbish tips outside the walls of Jerusalem. Such a place is attested in Biblical times; and in the NT its name, Gehenna, serves as a synonym for Hell.[243] Sikelianos may well have read some description such as the following:

> *Gehenna* pr[operly] *the valley of Hinnom* south of Jerusalem [. . .] polluted with every species of filth, as well as the carcasses of animals, and dead bodies of malefactors; to consume which, in order to avert the pestilence which such a mass of corruption would occasion, constant fires were kept burning.[244]

Sikelianos makes one reference to burning: καμένα ἀρρώστων στρώματα (line 6); and he speaks not only of the dog's carcass but also, in the second part of the poem, where the name Σιών thinly disguises German-occupied Athens, of πτώματα ἄφθαρτα (line 45).

Though his source is an Islamic vignette of an incident involving Jesus, Sikelianos' development and elaboration of the incident sounds like a

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[242] It is tempting to see Asin (1919) as Sikelianos' principal source, since there the story is specifically associated with the term 'agraphon' by its inclusion in a collection of 'Logia et agrapha Domini Jesu' from Islamic sources. Sikelianos' attention could have been directed to Asin's publication by some third party familiar with such specialist literature.

[243] See, for example, Matthew 5.22, 29, 30; 10.28; 18.9.

[244] Bagster n.d.: 76.

Gospel paraphrase. This is achieved through the imitation of the narrative style of the Gospels. The particular details of the story are embedded in expressions of a more general nature which echo the Gospels. By placing this incident in the vicinity of Jerusalem Sikelianos implies its association with the last days of Jesus' life;[245] and, as will appear below, many of the examples of Gospel phraseology imitated by Sikelianos occur (though not in most cases exclusively) in the accounts of that final period, and of events of the night before the Crucifixion in particular.

Consider the opening of the poem:

> Ἐπροχωροῦσαν ἔξω ἀπὸ τὰ τείχη
> τῆς Σιὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθητές Του,
> σάν, λίγο ἀκόμα πρὶν νὰ γείρει ὁ ἥλιος [. . .].

This setting of the scene contains two elements often found in the opening of Gospel episodes: Jesus walking somewhere with his disciples, and sunset. A number of Gospel incidents involving Jesus with the disciples, but with no other thematic connection with this poem take place around sunset. The phrase ὀψίας (δὲ) γενομένης[246] occurs six times in Matthew, five in Mark, and has the character of a formulaic narrative opening.[247] Sikelianos' reference to sunset is almost immediately preceded by the phrase, ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθητές του, and a similar juxtaposition occurs at the beginning of the account of the Last Supper:

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[245] Only in John (5.1, 10.22) is the adult Jesus explicitly stated to have been in Jerusalem prior to the final visit.

[246] Literally 'when the late [sc. ὥρα] had come'. The expression is ambiguous in its relation to sunset, since the ancient Jews spoke of two 'late' or 'evening' hours, the first 'from the ninth hour until sunset' and the second 'from sunset until dark' (Bagster n.d.: 297).

[247] Matthew 8.16, 14.15, 14.23, 20.8, 26.20, 25.27; Mark 1.32, 4.35, 6.47, 14.17, 15.42. Luke avoids this expression, but one of his substitutes contains a metaphor, ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤρξατο κλίνειν (Luke 9.12), which is similiar to Sikelianos' (admittedly commonplace) metaphor, νὰ γείρει ὁ ἥλιος.

> Ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης ἀνέκειτο [subject: Jesus] μετὰ τῶν δώδεκα [some manuscripts add: μαθητῶν].[248]

While the Gospels contain nothing which corresponds exactly to Jesus' walking 'outside the walls of Zion' with his disciples, there are references to his going out of the city with them, and on one occasion this occurs around sunset,[249] while on another, after the Last Supper, they are setting out to Gethsemane.[250] Luke's account of the approach to Gethsemane contains the phrase, γενόμενος δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ τόπου,[251] which Sikelianos seems to echo (lines 4-5):

> ζυγώσανε ἀναπάντεχα στὸν τόπο
> ποὺ ἡ πόλη ἔριχνε χρόνια τὰ σκουπίδια.

The relative clause here has a structural parallel in Matthew's account of the approach to Golgotha, which is also called a τόπος in all four Gospels:

> Καὶ ἐλθόντες εἰς τόπον λεγόμενον Γολγοθᾶ, ὅ ἐστι λεγόμενος κρανίου τόπος.[252]

Details in Sikelianos' description of the very different responses of Jesus and his disciples to the pile of refuse with the carcass of the dog on top seem to echo details from the Gospel accounts of the arrest in Gethsemane. Jesus, μοναχὸς προχωρώντας πρὸς τὸ σωρό, stood close to the carcass (lines 16-18), while the disciples 'drew back' (line 15). In Gethsemane too Jesus went forward alone: first, leaving the disciples,

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[248] Matthew 26.20. Compare Mark 14.17, which has ἔρχεται in place of ἀνέκειτο.

[249] Mark 11.11. The equivalent passage in Matthew (21.17) includes the phrase ἔξω τῆς πόλεως, but lacks μετὰ τῶν δώδεκα.

[250] John 18.1.

[251] Luke 22.40.

[252] Matthew 27.33.

προελθὼν μικρόν, he fell to the ground and prayed; later, when he saw the soldiers approaching,

> he came forward (ἐξελθών) and said to them "Whom do you seek?" They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." [. . .] when he said to them "I am he," they drew back and fell to the gound.[253]

The expression translated 'drew back', ἀπῆλθον εἰς τὸ ὀπίσω, is very close to the verb πισοδρομῆσαν which Sikelianos uses for the disciples reaction to the stench of the carcass.

Sikelianos now chooses to have just one of the disciples express their surprise at Jesus' actions (lines 18-21):

> ἔτσι, πόνας
> δὲν ἐκρατήθη μαθητὴς καὶ Τοῦ 'πεν
> ἀπὸ μακρά : «Ραββί, δὲ νιώθεις τάχα
> τὴ φοβερὴν ὀσμὴ καὶ στέκεσ' ἔτσι ;»

References to 'one disciple', or, rather, 'one of the disciples' are prominent in the Gospel accounts of the arrest in Gethsemane;[254] and in Matthew and Mark, in the moment of betrayal, Judas, like the 'one disciple' of the poem, addresses Jesus as ραββί.[255] Sikelianos has the 'one disciple' speak to Jesus ἀπὸ μακρά, echoing a phrase associated with Peter, who, after the arrest followed Jesus ἀπὸ μακρόθεν.[256]

When Sikelianos comes to Jesus' reply to the disciple's question, he

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[253] John 18.4-6.

[254] Matthew 26.51, 47; Mark 14.43; Luke 22.47.

[255] Matthew 26.49; Mark 14.45.

[256] Matthew 26.54. This phrase is probably more familiar in association with the female followers of Jesus observing the crucifixion 'from afar' (Matthew 27.55; Mark 15.40; Luke 23.49). In the disciple's question there is perhaps a distant echo of the unspoken perplexity of Simon the Pharisee, who was surprised at Jesus' apparent insensitivity to, in that case, *moral* pollution: οὗτος εἰ ἦν προφήτης, ἐγίνωσκεν ἂν τίς καὶ ποταπὴ ἡ γυνὴ ἥτις ἅπτεται αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἁμαρτωλός ἐστι (Luke 7.39).

amplifies considerably the bare remark about the whiteness of the dog's teeth (which is all he could have found in the sources), and he does so in terms which recall various canonical sayings of Jesus. Take, for example, lines 26-8:

Μὰ τώρα
αὐτὸ ποὺ βγαίνει ἀπ' τὴ φτορὰ θαμάζω
μὲ τὴν ψυχή μου ὁλάκερη . . .

In the Gospels Jesus rarely speaks of his 'soul'. Gethsemane (again) provides one instance: there Jesus says to Peter, James and John, περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή μου ἕως θανάτου.[257] Slightly closer to Sikelianos, since it begins with 'now', is the saying, Νῦν ἡ ψυχή μου τετάρακται,[258] and the idea of the 'whole soul' is found in Jesus' 'first and great commandment': ἀγαπήσεις Κύριον τὸν Θεόν σου [. . .] ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ψυχῇ σου.[259] And Jesus is said to have 'marvelled' (ἐθαύμασε) at the faith of the centurion who believed that his servant could be healed even at a distance.[260]

When Sikelianos has Jesus say (lines 28-9),

Κοιτάχτε
πῶς λάμπουνε τὰ δόντια αὐτοῦ τοῦ σκύλου

he is reproducing the syntax of a very familiar saying of Jesus:

Καταμάθετε τὰ κρίνα τοῦ ἀγροῦ πῶς αὐξάνει.[261]

And, as if to confirm the subliminal presence of these words, Sikelianos'

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257 Matthew 26.38.

258 John 12.27.

259 Matthew 22.37.

260 Matthew 8.10.

261 Matthew 6.28.

Jesus now says (line 30) that the dogs teeth 'shine' ὡσὰν τὸ κρίνο.

When Jesus has finished speaking, Sikelianos concludes the poem's narrative part (his imitation of a Gospel reading) as follows (lines 34-7):

> 'Ετσ' εἶπ' 'Εκεῖνος· κ' εἶτε νιῶσαν ἢ ὄχι
> τὰ λόγια τοῦτα οἱ μαθητές, ἀντάμα,
> σὰν ἐκινήθη, ἀκλούθησαν καὶ πάλι
> τὸ σιωπηλό Του δρόμο . . .

'Ετσ' εἶπ' 'Εκεῖνος suggests the frequently repeated OT formula, οὕτως εἶπε Κύριος, while what follows is, in a general way, reminiscent of Mark's description of Jesus and the disciples going up to Jerusalem:

> καὶ ἦν προάγων αὐτοὺς ὁ 'Ιησοῦς, καὶ ἐθαμβοῦντο, καὶ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἐφοβοῦντο.[262]

Or of Luke's characterization of Jesus' determination in a parallel passage:

> καὶ αὐτὸς ἐστήριξε τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ τοῦ πορεύεσθαι εἰς 'Ιερουσαλήμ.[263]

The two distinct elements in Sikelianos' lines, the question of whether or not the disciples 'understood' (νιῶσαν) Jesus' words, and the statement that they followed him, are both recurrent motifs in the Gospels. Οὔπω νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε; Jesus asks the disciples when they take literally his saying about the 'leaven of the Pharisees';[264] and συνήκατε ταῦτα πάντα; he asks them after a series of parables.[265] Οἱ δὲ ἠγνόουν τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο, Luke tells us when Jesus prophesies his death.[266] And one of the occasions on which it is explicitly stated that the disciples followed

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[262] Mark 10.32.

[263] Luke 9.51.

[264] Mark 8.17.

[265] Matthew 13.51.

[266] Luke 9.45. For similar statement see also Mark 6.52. 9.32; Luke 18.34; John 12.16.

Jesus is the approach to Gethsemane: Luke says ἀκολούθησαν δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ.[267]

Clearly there is no question of Sikelianos trying to establish a systematic thematic parallel between the arrest in Gethsemane (or any of the other Gospel incidents where parallels to his phraseology are found) and the non-canonical incident he is developing. He has simply drawn on the vocabulary of the Gospel narratives to colour his own account.

«Ἄγραφον» is an example of the sombre and restrained style of the best of Sikelianos' later poetry. Though based on an Islamic agraphon, it offers, among the many representations of Jesus in Sikelianos' poetry, the one least at variance with the Gospels. This is due in part to the style, but also to the absence of those distortions, evident in many other poems, by which Jesus is eroticized or paganized. Nevertheless, the Christ of «Ἄγραφον» is not the Christ of the Gospels. Jesus' response to the whiteness of the dog's teeth is entirely foreign to the moral climate of the NT, where the smouldering rubbish tips outside Jersualem are a byword for Hell. It has, rather, the Sufic flavour of the poem's ultimate sources, and one suspects that its very strangeness (from a Christian perspective) was part of its appeal to Sikelianos. Moreover, it has a strong aesthetic dimension. It requires, one might say, the imagination of a poet to see the teeth in a dog's putrescent carcass as 'a great pledge, a reflexion of the Eternal One, a harsh lightning bolt of the Just One and a hope' (lines 31-3). But these are the words which Sikelianos gives to Jesus, his gloss on the sources, in which Jesus simply remarks on the whiteness of the teeth without elaboration. The lightning bolt, more suggestive of Zeus than Christ, is the poem's only syncretistic gesture. Ὁ Δίκαιος and ὁ Αἰώνιος are NT terms denoting Christ and God respectively.[268] This may not.

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[267] Luke 22.39. See also Matthew 4.20, 4.22, 8.23; Mark 6.1.

[268] For NT sources of Δίκαιος see p.341 (in connection with Elytis' more appropriative uses of this term). For Αἰώνιος see Romans 16.26, Hebrews 9.14 (and also III

however, be their primary significance to Sikelianos, who is giving to Jesus the words he himself wants to appropriate in order to define his own role as a Greek poet in the horrors of occupied Athens.

In the prayer-like second part of the poem, the poet, 'in the midst of the frightful stench through which [he] pass[es]', asks Jesus to grant ἕν' ἄσπρο / σημάδι [. . .] κάτι νὰ λάμψει ξάφνου καὶ βαθιά μου (lines 47-54). Despite the element of *imitatio Christi* and apparent humility in the poet's prayer, he preserves his autonomy: his 'white sign' will only be 'like the teeth of that dog' (line 56) in a limited sense, for it will 'shine deep inside him'. It will, in other words, rise up from his own self, rather than appearing in the external world. But like the dog's teeth for *his* Jesus, it will be a sign of Eternity and Justice (lines 31b-33 are repeated as lines 58b-60). The 'lightning bolt of the Just One' represents, surely, a protest at the injustice of the Occupation. Published in *Νέα Ἑστία* in October 1941, «Ἄγραφον» would have been liable to censorship. The poem offers a glimmer of hope to the Greeks. Attributed to Christ, the words of hope and the veiled threat of divine vengeance gain authority, while the poem's concentration on the figure of Christ, and its sombre, respectful, even pious tone (δῶσε / δὸς καὶ σ' ἐμένα, Κύριε: lines 40-41) allow it to pass for a religious poem. The doubt expressed in lines 34-5 as to whether the disciples understood the words of Jesus could be read as a pointer to hidden meaning in the poem itself.

Despite this element of subterfuge, the poem is deeply felt, and remains a powerful statement transcending the circumstances in which it was composed and to which it alludes. Given its well contrived effects and its complex relation to Biblical and other texts, Anna Sikelianou's claim that its composition was spontaneous must be viewed with scepticism.[269]

As my analysis indicates, «Ἄγραφον», despite its apparent free-

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Maccabees 6.12).

[269] Sikelianou n.d.: 145-6.

standing simplicity, is appropriative. Starting from the Islamic agraphon, it contextualizes and elaborates the story, appropriating Biblical language to create a more familiar image of Christ. But this Christ is indirectly appropriated to the poet, since his function is to represent the way the poet aspires to perceive and to act in the 'frightful stench' of the Occupation. And finally there is the sleight of hand of attributing to Christ (with no basis in the Islamic sources) the ideas that the poet himself wants to appropriate.

3.7 Christ–Dionysus

I noted in §3.1 identifications of Jesus with Adonis, a Titan, Dionysus, Iacchus and Apollo in the poetry of Sikelianos,[270] but it is only the identification with Dionysus which is developed to any significant extent. It figures prominently in four poems from two distinct periods almost thirty years apart: «'Αντρίκειο Βάφτισμα» and «Διόνυσος–'Ιησοῦς» both published in 1917, and «'Ελληνικὸς νεκρόδειπνος» and «Διόνυσος ἐπὶ λίκνῳ» both published in 1945; and is an important element in at least two others, «'Ελεύτερα Δωδεκάνησα» (1945) and «'Απόλλων Διονυσόδοτος» (1946).

There can be little doubt that in the poetry of Sikelianos Dionysus is the supreme symbol of value. For Sikelianos Christ comes after Dionysus not only in the temporal sequence of the myths but also in order of importance. In all the poems considered in this section Christ is assimilated to Dionysus, not through the mere juxtaposition of names— in some poems Christ is not named at all— but, more effectively, through the appropriation to Dionysus of elements of Biblical and liturgical language which in their original context refer to, or are associated with, Christ. There are also examples of such appropriation to the persona of the poet; and the Dionysus of Sikelianos' imagination, to whom Christ is assimilated, is an enlarged image of the poet projected on the screen of myth, the power of the god representing the supposed transfiguring and saving power of poetry. The assimilation is effected primarily, though not exclusively, through wine and vine imagery, the chief exception being «Διόνυσος ἐπὶ λίκνῳ» (1945) which presents the fusion of the two gods in the context of the Nativity.[271]

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[270] See pp.142-3.

[271] This was already latent in «Πέμπτο Εὐαγγέλιο», where the Panagia is likened to Semele (see p.213), and hinted at in «Διόνυσος–'Ιησοῦς», where Dionysus (under the

«Διόνυσος–Ἰησοῦς» contains the implicit claim on Sikelianos' part to be the first to rediscover the true meaning of Christ's wine/blood, and thus to unite in his verse the two principal strands of the Greek heritage. In developing the fusion of Christ and Dionysus, Sikelianos repeatedly appropriates the language of the NT accounts of the Last Supper and of the Orthodox Liturgies.

«Ἀντρίκειο Βάφτισμα» (from *Ἡ Συνείδηση τῆς Πίστης*, 1917) contains the first clear identification of Christ with Dionysus.[272] In a detailed analysis of the poem Vogiatzoglou argues persuasively that its narrative line reflects Sikelianos' experience on Athos: the ascent of the mountain, in which he observes monks gathering honey, and the arrival at the church of the Iviron monastery.[273] The identification of Christ and Dionysus develops out of the poet's observation of the decorative scheme of the church. He sees an image of the vintage with the 'untrodden wine press', and higher up, trailing across the iconostases in gold relief, a vine (lines 138-47). The context and content of this imagery is, one initially assumes, entirely Christian, but when the poet emerges from the silence and the dim light of the church 'intoxication is ringing in his mind', and his

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name Iacchus) is spoken of as βρέφος (see pp.253-5). Christ is made present in «Διόνυσος ἐπὶ λίκνῳ» (Sikelianos 1965-69: V, 151-4) through allusions to the refrain of Romanos' Kontakion No.1, παιδίον νέον, ὁ πρὸ αἰώνων θεός, in lines 19-20 and 46-9; to Luke 2.13-15 in lines 25-6; and to Sikelianos' own earlier and incomplete account of the Nativity in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* in lines 23-4 (see p.222 above and compare Sikelianos 1965-69: IV, 112); and of course through the exclamation Γλυκό μου βρέφος, Διόνυσε μου καὶ Χριστέ μου (line 60, compare 92). However, the poem is more pagan than Christian, particularly in the closing passage (lines 68-92) where the poet's determination, as one of Nonnus' Corybantes (*Dionysiaca* 9.162-6), to protect the divine infant even at the cost of his own life makes clear that this Dionysus-Christ is a symbol of supreme value, and also (in the wartime context of the poem's composition) of the embattled Greek spirit.

[272] Sikelianos 1965-69: III, 180-92.

[273] Vogiatzoglou 1993: 259-76.

'thought' (λογισμός) is a θύρσος ζωντανός (lines 148-154). Clearly it is the imagery of the vine that diverts the poet's mind from the Christian content of the church's iconography to Dionysus, represented by his attribute, the thyrsus. Later he says that in the church he was not like Orpheus seeking the 'lost light', but 'entered as a ploughshare enters the dark earth' (lines 191-7). He means, surely, that he was not seeking the Christian vision which could be read from the interior surfaces of the church, but came as an active agent to unearth a deeper meaning. That deeper meaning is pagan; and when the climactic vision comes it takes the form of a paganized Crucifixion, very nearly free of Christian meaning (lines 224-6, 230-36, 246-51):

ξάνοιξα ἄξαφνα μπροστά μου
ἐσέ, Τιτάνα
στὸ Σταυρό !

. . . . . .

Κ' ἐσύ,
σὰν κλῆμα καρφωμένο
μ' ὅλα τὰ τσαμπιά του
ρίζα καὶ κλαριά,

ἐσταζοβόλαες κι ἀχτιδοβολοῦσες
σὰν 'Απριλομάης
εἰρηνικά !

. . . . . .

Ὦ λατρεμένο ἀντίφεγγο τῆς πλάσης
καρφωμένο στὸν ἀτάραχο βυθό !

Ὦ πλέρια εἰκόνα !

Ὦ γλυκοθάνατε καημέ !

Ὦ Βάκχε, Βάκχε
πὄκρυβε ὁ Τυφώνας !

This vision involves the combination of distinct elements of Christian

imagery: Christ crucified, Christ as the Vine,[274] and Christ as Light.[275] However, Christ is not named, either here or elsewhere in the poem, and the resultant compound image is first addressed as a Titan and later as Bacchus.[276] The reality of crucifixion as a slow and painful method of execution is almost totally evaded. The only reference to suffering and death is ambiguous (γλυκοθάνατε καημέ), as though the sweetness of ripe grapes has been substituted for the bitterness of gall and the sourness of vinegar properly associated with the Crucifixion.[277] Even the participle καρφωμένο points away from the nails of the Cross to the more innocent nails by means of which a vine is held in place.

There is, however, one element which links Sikelianos' 'Titan on the Cross' to a conventional depiction of the Crucifixion. In the lines omitted from the quotation above, the Mother of the Crucified (ἡ Μάνα σου ἡ γλυκιά, line 245) is watching from the side.[278] Yet she does not see her son wounded, but whole: σὲ βλέπει ἀκέριο. This is echoed a few lines later when the poet addresses his image of the crucified Titan/Bacchus as πλέρια εἰκόνα. The wholeness or fullness of the image is the work of the poet who has transformed the harsh reality of the Crucifixion into the rich natural image of the vine with its clusters of grapes (τσαμπιά), dripping moisture and giving off light. The imagery of light and the vine is Christian, and even the 'cluster' (βότρυς) is an established image for Christ,[279] but the transformation is Dionysiac, reflecting Dionysus'

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[274] John 15.1-5.

[275] John 9.5 and *passim*.

[276] The reference to Typhon ('O Bacchus, Bacchus whom Typhon concealed') seems obscure. Perhaps Sikelianos has conflated Dionysus with Zeus who was wounded by Typhon and concealed in a cave. Like Christ, Zeus was wounded in the hands and feet: Typhon incapacitated the god by cutting out the tendons.

[277] Matthew 27.34, 48.

[278] Compare John 19.25.

[279] The Akathistos Canon calls the Virgin ἄμπελος ἀληθινή, τὸν βότρυν τὸ πέπειρον ἡ γεωργήσασα (Ode 7, *troparion* 1). However, Βότρυς was also an epithet

'miracle' in transforming the ship into a vine arbour, as recounted by Sikelianos in «Ταξιδεύω μὲ τὸν Διόνυσο», where the 'fruit' is 'like a lamp'.[280]

In «'Αντρίκειο Βάφτισμα», Christ is made present through reference to things associated with him (Baptism, a church, the Cross, the Μάνα γλυκιά), but never named. It is as though he has disappeared into his own image of the vine (ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή),[281] which has then become an image of a Titan and later of Dionysus ('Bacchus'). The Cross itself seems to remain, as that to which the vine is attached, but in the parenthetic account of the Epiphany custom of throwing a cross into the sea, Sikelianos hints at the transformation of the Cross (lines 250-93). The youth who succeeds in retrieving the cross from the sea bed breaks the surface like a dolphin (a Dionysiac transformation?) (lines 282-6), and the cross in his hand is (lines 290-93)

σὰν ἄβρετο μαργαριτάρι
ὡς ψάρι ποὺ ἐσπαρτάρει
ἀχτιδοβόλο
ζωντανό !

While it is true that the fish was an early Christian sign for Christ, (representing the acronym ΙΧΘΥΣ), as Vogiatzoglou points out in this context,[282] and that the pearl too may stand for Christ,[283] the Christian significance of fish and pearl is not in the foreground here. Sikelianos suggests, rather, that by its Baptism in the sea the cross, a symbol of death,

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of Dionysus in his cult at Philippi (Farnell 1896-99: V, 97).

[280] Sikelianos 1965-69: III, 19. And again, later, in «'Ελεύτερα Δωδεκάνησα» (*ibid.* V, 166).

[281] John 15.1.

[282] Vogiatzoglou 1993: 275.

[283] The Akathistos Canon calls the Virgin κόχλος ἡ τὸν θεῖον μαργαρίτην προαγαγοῦσα (Ode 5, *troparion* 5).

is transformed into something natural, living and luminescent.[284]

Such transformations resonate on many levels, but are, perhaps, primarily self-referential metaphors, indicating the poetic transformation of Christian material. The experiences recounted in the poem are undoubtedly linked to Sikelianos' experiences on Athos. For Vogiatzoglou «'Αντρίκειο Βάφτισμα» represents 'the poet's initiation into Christianity', and she even speaks of his being 'converted to Christianity both spiritually and poetically'.[285] However, it does not seem to me that the poet's 'Baptism' is a Christian Baptism at all. The title, «'Αντρίκειο Βάφτισμα», though redolent of the primitive church in particular, is itself a metaphor. The adult Baptism of the shepherds at the beginning of the poem (lines 1-26) is simply an extended simile for the poet's descent into the 'decision' of his 'Soul' (lines 27-30). This implies that the poet is the agent of his own 'Baptism'. If there is a specific moment of 'Baptism' in the poem it occurs in church. But the poet comes to the church already a devotee of Dionysus («Ταξιδεύω μὲ τὸ Διόνυσο»), and it is Dionysus rather than Christ he finds there (when he emerges his thought has become a thyrsus), as, later, it is Dionysus he sees on the Cross.

In discussing the Epiphany scene, Vogiatzoglou suggests a reversal:

> Instead of focusing on the hallowing of the water through the throwing of the Cross into it, which is usually how Epiphany is perceived, Sikelianos stresses the purifying power of the water itself; the Cross emerges from the sea as revitalized as the shepherds after their christening at the beginning of the poem.[286]

The subversion of Christian meaning which Vogiatzoglou hints at here is, I believe, fundamental to the poem. Epiphany in the Orthodox Church is the

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[284] This anticipates Elytis' transformation of the Cross into the Trident-dolphin symbol (see pp.334-7).

[285] Vogiatzoglou 1993: 272, 270.

[286] Vogiatzoglou 1993: 259-60.

celebration of the Baptism of Christ, and what «'Αντρίκειο Βάφτισμα» celebrates is not Sikelianos' supposed initiation into Christianity on Athos, but, rather, the initiation of Christ into Sikelianos' poetic cult of Dionysus. It is through the identification with Dionysus that Christ first becomes a vital presence in the poetry of Sikelianos, beyond the beauty petrified in death of the juvenilia.

The identification established in «'Αντρίκειο Βάφτισμα» is reasserted in the title of the sixth poem of *Ἡ Συνείδηση τῆς Πίστης*, «Διόνυσος–'Ιησοῦς». The title invites us to read the poem in terms of the unity of Dionysus and Jesus. Though, like «'Αντρίκειο Βάφτισμα», it reflects elements of Sikelianos' experience on Athos, it lacks any unifying narrative thread comparable to that in the other poem. In narrative terms «Διόνυσος–'Ιησοῦς», as the hyphen in the title might lead us to expect, is episodic, unified through the wine motif. Wine functions not only as a common attribute of Dionysus and Jesus, but also, and perhaps most importantly, as a gift of the earth (lines 1-31, 260-65).

Among the episodes are two δεῖπνα whose descriptions contain possible echoes of the Last Supper or Communion.[287] Succeeding passages refer repeatedly to an expectation that someone unnamed, though again represented as an eagle, 'will come': Σὰν ἕνα κλῆμα (which slowly climbs a wall, enters through a window and spreads inside the house) θὰ 'ρτεῖ [. . .] Θὰ 'ρτεῖ καθὼς τὸ φίδι [. . .] θὰ 'ρτεῖ [. . .] χρυσαϊτός (lines 111-22). The expectation of someone coming at a future time points to Christ; and the vine is a symbol of Christ; but it is also a symbol of

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[287] Compare, for example, 'Αλλὰ τοῦ δείπνου ἡ ὥρα / ἔβρισκε πάντα / τὸ λινὸ στρωμένο στὸ τραπέζι (lines 51-3) with the opening of Luke's account of the Last Supper, καὶ ὅτε ἐγένετο ἡ ὥρα (Luke 22.14)— Sikelianos' actual phrase occurs in the parable of the Great Supper: τῇ ὥρᾳ τοῦ δείπνου (Luke 14.17)— and with the description of the room of the Last Supper as ἀνώγαιον μέγα ἐστρωμένον which the disciples 'found (εὗρον') as he had told them' (Luke 22.12-13).

Dionysus, and the vine taking over the house suggests the vine of Dionysus taking over the ship in the myth. However, 'vine', 'snake' and 'eagle' are only partial images, in contrast to ἡ πλέρια εἰκόνα Του (line 124). This Του has no apparent antecedent, except the Διόνυσος–Ἰησοῦς of the title. Sikelianos has already used the phrase πλέρια εἰκόνα in «Ἀντρίκειο Βάφτισμα», in the passage about the 'Titan on the Cross' and in close association with the words Ὦ Βάκχε (see above). In both poems it seems that the 'complete image' requires the fusion of Christ with Dionysus and other pagan gods.[288]

Later the expectation of arrival is fulfilled (lines 151-2):

> Καὶ νά· ἦρτε!
> Ἡ πλέρια εἰκόνα Του ἦρτε!

This introduces the second δεῖπνον passage (lines 153-4):

> Δὲ φωτίζει ὁ λύχνος
> τὸ τραπέζι μας τοῦ δείπνου τὸ κρυφό!

Here the eucharistic allusion is unmistakable, the 'secret table of the supper' reflecting not only the Μυστικὸς Δεῖπνος,[289] but also, and more precisely, the μυστικὴ τράπεζα of the *oikos* which follows Ode 6 in the

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[288] For the use of πλέρια εἰκόνα in relation to the poet himself in «Κατορθωμένο Σῶμα», and its influence on Elytis, see pp.304-6.

[289] Vogiatzoglou suggests (1993: 288) that what Sikelianos 'seems to have in mind here' is not the eucharistic Μυστικὸς Δεῖπνος but what she calls 'the "secret" supper which the Apostles offered Christ after the Resurrection'. She is evidently referring to Luke 24.41-3, where, to demonstrate his physical reality, Jesus asks the disciples ἔχετέ τι βρώσιμον ἐνθάδε; οἱ δὲ ἐπέδωκαν αὐτῷ ἰχθύος ὀπτοῦ μέρος καὶ ἀπὸ μελισσίου κηρίου. There is, however, nothing explicitly 'secret' about this incident, and only the single word κερήθρα (line 155) could justify the connection, and this occurs often in Sikelianos' poetry. In «Carmen Occultum» on the other hand, as Vogiatoglou points out (1993: 296, n.9), Sikelianos alludes unmistakably to the incident of the fish and honeycomb (Sikelianos 1965-69: V, 78).

Canon in Orthros of Maundy Thursday:

> Τῇ μυστικῇ ἐν φόβῳ τραπέζῃ προσεγγίσαντες πάντες.
> καθαραῖς ταῖς ψυχαῖς τὸν ἄρτον ὑποδεξώμεθα.

Neither bread nor wine is mentioned in Sikelianos' second δεῖπνο, though honeycomb and water are (lines 155-8), and the δεῖπνον is associated with deep bodily ease and satisfaction and mental illumination (lines 159-66). It brings us no nearer, however, to identifying the Του of ἡ πλέρια εἰκόνα Του.

There follows a passage addressed to 'my earth', in which the poet speaks of opening τὸ μυριόχρονο κρατήρα (lines 167-70). The wine which it contains seems to be both pagan and Christian. While the gods (necessarily pagan in the plural) smell its μύρο ἀνείπωτο from afar (lines 171-3), the phrases κρασὶ τοῦ ἀρρώστου and κρασὶ τοῦ ἐτοιμοθάνατου (lines 176-8) suggest the Communion of the sick and dying, and κρασὶ τοῦ ἁγνοῦ, / πού 'ναι ἡ ψυχή του (lines 174-5) suggests the purity seen as a necessary preparation for Communion in many liturgical texts, and reflects the phrase καθαραῖς ταῖς ψυχαῖς in the Maundy Thursday *oikos* quoted above.

The Christian focus is maintained in a passage describing villagers emerging from church after the Easter Vigil and spreading out through the fields with their lighted candles (lines 189-203), and in a series of rhetorical questions, which, to anyone familiar the Gospel stories of miracles of healing (of the blind, dumb and insane among others) must suggest the answer 'Jesus' (lines 212-19):

> Ποιὸς ἄναψε ἄξαφνα χρυσὸ καντήλι
> μὲς στὴ φρένα τοῦ τυφλοῦ;
>
> Μὲς στοῦ βουβοῦ τὸν οὐρανίσκο
> ποιὸς ἐσάλεψε

. . . .
τὸ 'Αλληλούια
μυστικά;

Ποιὸς εἶδε τοῦ τρελοῦ το φῶς;

But Sikelianos' answer is not so simple, and it is not given immediately, but approached through the figure of a hieratic celebrant who is at once pagan and Christian. He is a coryphaeus, a 'leader', but more specifically a leader of the chorus in Attic drama, and he is 'like a white bull', a typical sacrificial animal in pagan ritual; yet he stands by an icon of St George, and is μεράζοντας τὸ ἀντίδωρο, distributing, that is, the blessed but unconsecrated bread at the end of the Liturgy (lines 224-32). In the description of the last action of the coryphaeus the second person unexpectedly appears, and, in the extended apostrophe that follows, the voice of the poet seems to become the voice of the coryphaeus,[290] answering the questions (Who gave gave sight to the blind? etc.) and revealing more clearly the nature of the πλέρια εἰκόνα (lines 236-49):

Σκύβει στερνὸς καὶ παίρνει ἕνα μπουμπούκι
ἀπ' τὸ κανίστρι,
κι ἀνασαίνει τὸν ἀκέριο σου Ἔρωτα,
ὦ Ζωή !

Ὦ Πάσχα,
πανσεβάσμιο Πάσχα!

Ὦ Ἴακχε!

'Απόλλωνα!

'Ιησοῦ !

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290 That Sikelianos sees the *antidoron*, at least at a later stage in his career, as a metaphor for his own poetry is suggested in his choice of *'Αντίδωρο* as the title of a selection from his work published in 1943.

Πῶς βρέφος ἄπλωσες τὸ χέρι στὸ σταούλι!

Πῶς ἁρμόνισες τὴ λύρα, ἀντρίτης, στὴ χαρά!

Κ' Ἐσὺ στερνέ,
Ἀρτοκόπε,
τῆς καρδιᾶς Σου μεραστή!

The phrase πανσεβάσμιο πάσχα is taken from the *Exaposteilarion* in Orthros of Easter Sunday (from the first *troparion* of the second set, first plagal tone):

> Πάσχα ἱερὸν ἡμῖν σήμερον ἀναδέδεικται· Πάσχα καινόν, ἅγιον· Πάσχα μυστικόν· Πάσχα πανσεβάσμιον· Πάσχα, Χριστὸς ὁ λυτρωτής.

But in the use of the vocative, and in their exclamatory character, the five lines of Sikelianos beginning Ὦ Πάσχα may be read as a parody of Ode 9 *troparion* 2 of the Canon which precedes the *Exaposteilarion*:

> Ὦ Πάσχα τὸ μέγα καὶ ἱερώτατον Χριστέ, ὦ σοφία καὶ Λόγε τοῦ Θεοῦ.

In both of these liturgical passages Πάσχα denotes Christ (the Paschal Lamb) rather than the Passover or Easter.[291] Sikelianos has obviously adopted this usage, though he interposes the names Iacchus and Apollo between Πάσχα and Χριστέ (Ἰησοῦ in Sikelianos). He is in effect inserting the names of two pagan gods into a well known liturgical text and thus subverting that text. The succession of the three divine names is followed by three more extended exclamations appropriate to each of the

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[291] The Aramaic word transliterated as πάσχα was used both of the feast of the Passover and of the sacrificial lamb eaten at the feast. Its application to Christ derives from I Corinthians 5.7: τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός.

three in turn. We are clearly meant to understand the three as manifestations of the same god. Iacchus is 'infant' and Apollo is 'man', but the sequence is unsatisfactorily completed by Jesus who does not represent some other stage of life but is simply 'last' (historically the latest manifestation of the god?).

Sikelianos is treating 'Iacchus' as a name of Dionysus, to whom ἄπλωσες τὸ χέρι στὸ σταφύλι is pertinent, just as ἁρμόνισε τὴ λύρα is pertinent to Apollo. This sudden introduction of Apollo seems rather arbitrary, but may have been prompted by Sikelianos' reading of the Easter Canon already quoted, where Christ is described in Apollonian terms as 'beautiful sun' in a sentence that also speaks of him as the Paschal Lamb (Ode 4, *troparion* 3):

> Ὡς ἐνιαύσιος ἀμνός, [. . .] ὑπὲρ πάντων τέθυται, πάσχα τὸ καθαρτήριον· καὶ αὖθις ἐκ τοῦ τάφου ὡραῖος δικαιοσύνης ἡμῖν ἔλαμψεν ἥλιος.

In speaking of Jesus as 'Breadcutter' and 'sharer of [his own] heart', Sikelianos is alluding to the Last Supper at which Christ, in the words of the Liturgy of John Chrysostom,

> λαβὼν ἄρτον [. . .] κλάσας, ἔδωκε τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ μαθηταῖς καὶ ἀποστόλοις εἰπών· Λάβετε, φάγετε, τοῦτο μού ἐστι τὸ Σῶμα, τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κλώμενον.

The specific idea of sharing (Christ as μεραστής) derives from a part of the Lucan account of the Last Supper which is not reflected in the Orthodox Liturgies where Christ says of the cup,

> λάβετε τοῦτο καὶ διαμερίσατε ἑαυτοῖς.[292]

In the phrase τῆς καρδιᾶς Σου μεραστή, Sikelianos has, in terms

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[292] Luke 22.17.

of Jesus' words at the Last Supper, substituted 'heart' for 'body' and/or 'blood'. The significance of the substitution is probably that the heart is traditionally the seat of the emotions. As in «'Αντρίκειο Βάφτισμα» the bodily sacrifice of the Crucifixion is evaded. If the 'heart' is a metonymy for the realm of feeling, then the allusion to Jesus' words and actions at the Last Supper is seen to conform to the allusion to the grapes and the lyre, and all three manifestations of the god may be read as metaphors for the poet: as an infant (Dionysus/Iacchus) he reaches for the grape, the source of intoxication and inspiration; as an adult (Apollo) he learns the craft of poetry ('tunes the lyre'); and finally as Jesus ('Εσὺ στερνέ) he 'divides [his] heart', that is, he gives himself to the people in his poetry. The immediate transition from Jesus dividing his heart to the poet ripening his, in the parenthetic passage which concludes the poem, tends to confirm the poet's self-reflexive and self-validating appropriation of Jesus.

The identification of the poet with Jesus in the closing lines is, apparently, only partial, since he speaks of entertaining Jesus (lines 250-57, 263-5):

(Ὦ μυστικὴ γαλήνη
χῶμα μου θεοφόρο,
π' οὔρμασα ἄστρο τὴν καρδιά μου
κι ἄστρο τὸ κρασί,

κρατώντας τῆς ἀθανασίας Σου
μέσα μου τὸ σπόρο
ἔτσι σφιχτά,

καθὼς ὁ Ἰκάριος τὸ Διόνυσο,
. . . . . .

ἐξένισα βαθιά σου.
μὲ τῆς γῆς ποὺ γνώρισα τὰ δῶρα.
τὸν **Ἰησοῦ** !)

The first four lines here are a condensed reprise of the opening passage of the poem (to line 31). There, what the poet 'matured' (or 'ripened') 'like wine' was not his heart but 'the power and the sweetness and the fragrance' of 'Life', identified with the ἁγία γῆ (lines 19-31). In both passages wine seems to be a metonymy for the vine: Sikelianos is thinking of the ripening of vines in the ground rather than the maturing of wine in a barrel. In the later passage, though, the syntactical equivalence of τὴν καρδιά μου and τὸ κρασί, as direct objects of οὔρμασα, hints at the liturgical equivalence of wine and blood. Here the poet is more clearly identified with, or has become a part of, the 'soil' or 'land': the soil is 'where he ripened his heart', and he himself holds a seed within him. And that he 'entertained Jesus' βαθιά σου, which appears to mean 'deep within the soil', since the antecedent of σου (line 263) appears to be γαλήνη=χῶμα (lines 250-51).

In line 254, though, if the initial capital of Σου is not simply an accidental inconsistency, it is possible that, despite the syntactical implications, it resumes the 'Εσύ addressed to Jesus in the previous sentence. The idea of the poet 'holding within [him]self the seed of the immortality' of Jesus (or of the composite god, Iacchus-Apollo-Jesus) is far more cogent than the convoluted and almost meaningless metaphor of the poet 'holding within [him]self the seed of the immortality' of the soil.[293] Furthermore, the seed of the immortality of Jesus could be thought of as entering the poet with the bread and wine of communion.

The relative clause, 'whom I recognized (γνώρισα) with the gifts of the earth', referring to Jesus, may be an allusion to the disciples who entertained a stranger in an inn at Emmaus and then 'recognized him' (ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτόν) when he broke bread for them.[294] In associating

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[293] And it is consistent with the stance in the other poems of this period, *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* and *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, in which the poet takes on himself the responsibility to restore a wounded or fallen Jesus (see pp.137-8, 189-91).

[294] Luke 24.13-33, 31.

Jesus with the 'gifts of the earth' and in speaking of entertaining him. Sikelianos is in any case appropriating liturgical language. The Communion bread and wine are literally the 'gifts of the earth' and are referred to as τὰ δῶρα ταῦτα in the Liturgy of John Chrysostom;[295] and a prayer of John Chrysostom included in the Service of Holy Communion[296] speaks of receiving the consecrated bread and wine in terms of entertaining Christ, adapting the words of the Centurion of the Gospel:

> Οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανός, Δέσποτα Κύριε, ἵνα εἰσέλθῃς ὑπὸ τὴν στέγην τῆς ψυχῆς μου.[297]

There is certainly no suggestion of unworthiness in Sikelianos,[298] and this liturgical metaphor itself suggests that entertaining and identification are not mutually exclusive, since the communicant who receives Jesus 'under the roof of [their] soul' takes the body of Christ into their own body.

The idea of entertaining is also related to the myth of Dionysus, for what the poet says is, 'As Icarius [entertained] Dionysus, I entertained Jesus.'[299] The effect of this comparison is to give the poet a special and privileged status in relation to Jesus. Dionysus rewarded Icarius' hospitality by giving him the secrets of wine-making. Thus Sikelianos subtly suggests that he is the first to bring to men the true wine of Christ, whose Dionysiac qualities he alone properly understands; and his poetry, as I have suggested

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[295] In both the Prayer of the Cherubic Hymn and the Offertory Prayer.

[296] The Ἀκολουθία τῆς Θείας Μεταλήψεως is used when Communion is adminstered without the celebration of the Liturgy, from previously consecrated elements.

[297] This is the beginning of the fourth of the ten Pre-Communion Prayers. The third, also by John Chrysostom, contains two similar expressions. For the source see Matthew 8.8.

[298] Indeed, his use of ἐξένισα might be seen as a presumptuous reversal of roles in terms of the Canon in Orthros of Maundy Thursday (Ode 9, *eirmos*): Ξενίας δεσποτικῆς καὶ ἀθανάτου τραπέζης [. . .] δεῦτε ἀπολαύσωμεν.

[299] Sikelianos probably does not mean to evoke Icarius' death at the hands of those who thought that in making their friends drunk he had poisoned them, but only his role in bringing the divine gift of wine to men.

was already implicit in the previous passage, is the medium through which the newly rediscovered gifts of Christ are to be distributed.

I turn finally to a much later poem in which the poet's role as celebrant at a Liturgy is made explicit and the identification of the poet with Jesus (and Dionysus) is very nearly explicit. In «Ἑλληνικὸς νεκρόδειπνος» (1945)[300] the speaker, who seems hardly distanced at all from Sikelianos (he is addressed within the poem as Angelos), recounts how he was invited to dinner one evening in a house out of town. The poet knew that his friends expected from him νέα φλογερὰ τραγούδια (lines 3 and 80-81) but he found the occasion too solemn; and when, after the meal, a special wine, brought by one of the friends as a gift for the poet, was opened and he was asked to 'give voice to the night' (line 29), he delivered a speech about the dead, both those known to the present company and the 'numberless ancient souls' (line 52). In this speech, he feels the souls of the dead approaching and stretching out their hands towards τοῦτο τὸ τραπέζι / τοῦ Πλούτωνα (lines 61-2). Though the table is Pluto's, the wine, as we shall see, is associated with Dionysus, and the poem, which begins with the invocation, Ὦ Διόνυσε-Ἄδη, seems to propose a fusion of these two gods.[301] However, this dual pagan god is also fused with Christ, though by more subtle means, for Christ is never named.

The friends eat in silence, each preoccupied with the same thought (lines 19-21): the thought, presumably, of the dead which the poet elaborates in his speech. Given that the poem was published in 1945, the dead known to them would include many who had died during the Occupation; and the frugality of the meal (τὸ λιτὸ δεῖπνο, line 20) may be indicative of continuing privations.

A gathering of friends for an evening meal, which has, or to which

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[300] Sikelianos 1965-69: V, 144-7.

[301] Their identification goes back to Heraclitus, as Svoronos notes (1984: 72): ὠυτὸς δὲ Ἀΐδης καὶ Διόνυσος (*Fragments* 127).

the poet imparts, a solemn, ritual and memorial character, is already thematically similar to the Last Supper at which Jesus and his disciples gathered, ὀψίας γενομένης, to eat the Passover meal.[302] The Passover was itself a μνημόσυνον of the Exodus from Egypt,[303] and Jesus added a further dimension to this when he instructed the disciples to repeat the sharing of bread and wine εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν, telling them, in the words of the Liturgy of Basil the Great, that as often as they repeat these actions τὸν ἐμὸν θάνατον καταγγέλλετε.[304] The poet says of all those gathered round the 'table of Pluto' for the νεκρόδειπνος that their thought λειτουργάει / μνημόσυνο βαθιά της (lines 41-2). The Septuagint's word for the Passover, μνημόσυνον, is also the word for the memorial services which in Orthodox practice take place at various fixed intervals after a person's death. In an ecclesiastical context, the verb λειτουργῶ in the active is usually restricted to the functions of the celebrant in the Liturgy. Its use here brings the μνημόσυνο of this νεκρόδειπνος closer to the ἀνάμνησις of the Liturgy; and the phrase λειτουργάει μνημόσυνο unites the same two elements of performance and memorial as the liturgical phrase τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν.[305] In general terms, then, the meal of the poet and his friends is likened both to

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[302] See pp.236-7.

[303] Exodus 12.14, 13.9.

[304] From the Eucharistic Prayer (i.e. the prayer including the words of consecration, not the post-communion Εὐχὴ τῆς Εὐχαριστίας), which transforms Paul's gloss on Jesus' instructions ('proclaim the Lord's death' etc., I Corinthians 11.26) into an extension of Jesus' words.

[305] The Μυστικὸς Δεῖπνος of the Communion has in itself an element of νεκρόδειπνος. The Eucharistic Prayer includes memorials of the dead. The celebrant first calls on God 'to visit us with the prayers of all thy saints', and then to 'remember all those who have fallen asleep'; and here a rubric provides for the naming of particular persons known to the congregation. In Sikelianos νεκρόδειπνος, the order is reversed. The poet refers first to 'the souls of men whose imprint we and the eternal night have preserved deep within', and then to the παλιὲς ψυχὲς ἀρίθμητες who outnumber the living.

the Last Supper and to its ritual re-enactment in the Liturgy. There are also more specific connections.

The poet, after referring in his speech to the souls of the dead approaching the table, continues as follows (lines 63-5, 69-74):

ἀφήσετέ τις
νὰ 'ρθοῦν ἐδῶ σ' ἐμᾶς, νὰ γίνουμ' ἕνα . . .
Κι ἀπ' τὸ ποτήρι, φίλε, ποὺ μοῦ δίνεις
. . . . . .
κι ἀπ' τὸ κρασὶ ποὺ τό 'φερες γιὰ μένα,
γιατ' εἶν' ἀδρόν, ὦ φίλε, κ' εὐωδάει
σὰν τοῦ Διονύσου τὸ χυμένον αἷμα,
ἄς μεταλάβουμε ὅλοι, σάμπως μύστες
παλαιοὶ ἀπ' τ' Ἀγαθοδαίμονα τὸ μέγα
τὸ κύπελλο.

The poet's command to let the dead approach 'that we may become one' has its parallels in the prayers for unity which follow the Eucharistic Prayer[306] in the Liturgies, though these do not involve the union of the living and the dead, but, rather, the unity of all the communicants.[307]

Though the poet compares the assembled company to pagan 'initiates' drinking in honour of the 'Good Genius', he uses the verb μεταλαμβάνω, which in the context of Orthodox Liturgy means to administer or receive communion. The primacy of the Christian analogy over the pagan is confirmed in lines 85-8, where the poet describes what happened after he had finished speaking: they all drank from the glass, the poet 'last of all': and he drank 'to the last drop', 'like the priest who drains the chalice within the Sanctuary'. It is not only in this final action that the poet plays

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306 See n.304 above.

307 Καὶ δὸς ἡμῖν ἐν ἑνὶ στόματι καὶ μιᾷ καρδίᾳ δοξάζειν [. . .] τὸ [. . .] ὄνομά σου (Liturgy of John Chrysostom). Ἡμᾶς δὲ πάντας, τοὺς ἐκ τοῦ ἑνὸς ἄρτου καὶ τοῦ ποτηρίου μετέχοντας, ἑνώσαις ἀλλήλοις εἰς ἑνὸς Πνεύματος Ἁγίου κοινωνίαν (Liturgy of Basil the Great).

the role of the celebrant. His injunction, ἀπ' τὸ ποτήρι [. . .] ἃ ξ μεταλάβουμε ὅλοι echoes the Eucharistic Prayer in which the celebrant recounts, and at the same time repeats and re-enacts, Christ's words and actions at the Last Supper:

> Ὁμοίως [λαβὼν] καὶ τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι λέγων· Πίετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες.

And Sikelianos' participle χυμένον in 'the shed blood of Dionysus' is the modern equivalent, in uncompounded form, of the participle denoting the shed blood of Christ in the words which follow those just quoted:

> τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ Αἷμά μου [. . .] τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυνόμενον.[308]

Through the appropriation of key words from the Liturgy, and the creation of phrases parallel to key phrases in the Liturgy, the blood of Dionysus and the blood of Christ are identified, and the poet is confirmed in the role of celebrant at this paganized Communion.[309]

Explicitly, Sikelianos does not go beyond comparisons: the poet acts '*like* the priest' and the wine smells '*like* the shed blood of Dionysus'. In

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[308] I have quoted from the Liturgy of John Chrysostom, the one most frequently performed in Greek Orthodox churches. The Eucharistic Prayer combines elements of the earliest account of the institution of the Eucharist in I Corinthians 11.23-5 with that in Matthew 26.20-29, with additional words and phrases not found in the New Testament. Matthew has the conjunction γάρ not found in the Liturgy (τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ αἷμά μου), and Sikelianos' awareness of this may be reflected in his conjunction γιατί which precedes the simile of Dionysus' blood.

[309] It is also worth noting that the words with which the poet's speech begins, Στὴ νύχτα τούτη (line 30), echo the opening of the account of the Last Supper in the Eucharistic Prayer, τῇ νυκτὶ ᾗ παρεδίδοτο, and that the description of the meal in the poem as being σὰ μεράδι / τοῦ Πλούτωνα ἱερό (lines 38-9) could be echoing the phrase, τὴν μερίδα τῶν ἁγιασμάτων σου describing the Communion in the Liturgy of Basil the Great (in one of the prayers between the Eucharistic Prayer and the Communion).

the myths of Dionysus the blood of the god is not explicitly associated with wine. His blood figures only at the beginning of his story: the infant Dionysus was dismembered by Titans and a pomegranate tree grew from the soil where his blood was shed. The fruit of the pomegranate is red inside and fragrant, and perhaps Sikelianos had the fragrance of the pomegranate in mind when he wrote that the wine εὐωδοῦσε / σὰν τοῦ Διονύσου τὸ χυμένον αἷμα. Nevertheless the association of wine and blood points unmistakably to Christ, and the use of the verb μεταλαμβάνω indicates the Communion wine which 'is' the blood of Christ (τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ αἷμά μου). Sikelianos is, in effect, saying that the wine which is the blood of Christ smells like the blood of Dionysus. The primary function of the comparison is to associate Christ with Dionysus.

As the one who commands all those present to drink (ἃ ς μεταλάβουμε ὅλοι), the poet is in the position of the celebrant; or even of Christ himself, for there is one indication in «Ἑλληνικὸς νεκρόδειπνος» that Sikelianos did entertain the idea of identifying the poet with Christ at the Last Supper, as well as with the celebrant at the Liturgy. The friend who brought the wine is described as a φίλος ἐπιστήθιος (line 23). This is an established expression for a 'bosom friend', but in the context of a δεῖπνος (line 20) in which wine is likened to χυμένον αἷμα (line 25)[310] it seems to point to τὸν μαθητὴν ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοὺς [...] ὃς καὶ ἀνέπεσεν ἐν τῷ δείπνῳ ἐπὶ τὸ στῆθος αὐτοῦ.[311] As the one who has such a friend, the poet identifies himself with Jesus; and, like Jesus at the Last Supper, he is the central figure at this νεκρόδειπνος: the wine is a gift for him; and the company anticipate his 'new songs'. Within the poem's narrative, these are withheld for another time (lines 80-83), but the whole poem is itself a new song, and one in which the poet

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[310] The comparison with the blood of Dionysus is first used in lines 22-5, and repeated within the poet's speech.

[311] John 21.20, referring to 13.23-5.

celebrates his own poetry.

If one turns to the very immodest opening of the poem with the appropriative significance of the φίλος ἐπιστήθιος in mind, as well as the appropriations of liturgical language relating to the blood of Christ, it becomes apparent that the blood of Dionysus and the blood of Christ may be substitutes for the blood of the poet, which is his poetry (lines 2-6):

> Καρτεροῦσαν οἱ φίλοι μου ν' ἀκούσουν
> νέα φλογερὰ τραγούδια ν' ἀνατείλουν
> στὰ χείλη μου, ὅπως ξέρανε ἀπὸ πάντα
> τὴν ἀρτηρία τοῦ λόγου μου νὰ σφύζει
> σὰν πύρινο ποτάμι.

This is, I suggest, the primary metaphor of blood in the poem. The poet's lifeblood is his verse, shed in the uttering of it. The real transubstantiation which underlies the poem is not of wine into blood, whether Dionysus' or Christ's, but of wine and blood into verse; and the appropriation of eucharistic language in «Ἑλληνικὸς νεκρόδειπνος» serves primarily to enhance the status of the poet.[312]

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[312] Eucharistic language is again appropriated to Dionysus in «Ἐλεύτερα Δωδεκάνησα» (1945) (Sikelianos 1965-69: V, 166-9). There the persona of the poet plays no part, and Dionysus is an overtly nationalist figure, patron of the recently liberated Dodecanese. Through the identification of Dionysus with Christ and then, somewhat bizarrely, with the author of the Apocalypse, Sikelianos attempts to attach to the almost jingoistic nationalism of the poem the moral authority of Christianity.

3.8 Conclusion

Sikelianos' impulse to rewrite the Gospel is already evident in the poems of his youth, where Christ becomes primarily a symbol of beauty. Christ is not only aestheticized, he is also transformed, at the moment of death, into a pagan god: adopted by Zeus in «(Φανταστικὴ Μυθολογία)»: his true nature revealed in the ichor flowing from his side in «'Ιησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος». In the later poems the Hellenization of Christ is effected through his identification with specific gods, above all Dionysus, and encapsulated in the idea of raising to the summit of Helicon a bird which represents Jesus (in *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*) or the 'Myth of Jesus' (in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*).

The poet's self-appointed role in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* is that of Fifth Evangelist, but Sikelianos' projected rewriting of the Gospel, not surprisingly, remained unfinished. The extant parts are mainly devoted to the Panagia, whose early life is almost completely recontextualized through the suppression of specifically Jewish elements in the sources and her union with the world of nature. Developing an idea already present in «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ 'Ανθρώπου», Sikelianos transforms the Annunciation into a sexual encounter between God and a mortal, comparable to that between Zeus and Semele. In this Sikelianos not only affronts both Christian doctrine and Christian morality but also flies in the face of the Biblical and Apocryphal sources. His Annunciation is perhaps the most radical rewriting of the Christian 'Myth' in the mature poetry. For outright defiance of the Christian sacred texts it is rivalled only by the emphatic contradiction of John in «'Ιησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος» where the poet, in effect, declares that ichor and *not* 'blood and water' flowed from the wound in Christ's side.

The parts of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* dealing with Christ contain only occasional syncretistic gestures. They are deviant, from a Christian

perspective, in stressing the human qualities of Jesus, including his beauty, and eroticizing his relationships with Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene. Outside of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* and the juvenilia, Sikelianos does not engage closely with the sacred narratives of Christianity. The repeated identifications of Christ with Dionysus and other pagan deities usually operate at some distance from Christian texts. This is perhaps inevitable, since there are, in fact, very few points of contact between the narratives of Jesus' life and the myths of Dionysus. The Christ of the Gospels is simply not a Dionysiac figure. This perhaps illuminates one of Sikelianos' problems in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, and may be one of the reasons he abandoned the project. While his Annunciation certainly does violence to its sources, his concept of Christ as Dionysus could not have been developed at all through a detailed rewriting of the 'Myth of Jesus', had it followed the Gospels even to the extent that his rewriting of the Virgins's life follows the Protevangelium Iacobi.

The degree of distance from Christian sources is not the only important difference between the poems on the Christ-Dionysus theme and *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*. The poet's role in relation to the composite god is at the heart of the former, while in those parts of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* dealing with Christian material the poet figures only in the frame narrative. In most of the other poems considered in this chapter the development of the poet's role in relation to his gods is a central theme, evident even behind the apparent humility of «Ἄγραφον». In those poems which rest on the supposed fusion of Christ and Dionysus, the poet emerges as the high priest or principal representative and spokesman of his pagan-Christian (and distinctively Greek) god. At times the boundary between poet and god is blurred, and particularly where, through the appropriation of Biblical and liturgical language, the poet takes the place of Christ. And this displacement is not limited to Dionysian contexts. In «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου» the poet implicitly makes himself the son of the

Panagia, while in *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*, through the appropriation of Pauline texts, he assumes Christ's role in the resurrection of the dead.

The poet's displacement of Christ, evident but neither central nor extensive in Palamas, as important in Sikelianos as the paganization of Christ, becomes in Elytis the primary function of the appropriations of Biblical and liturgical language. A significant distinction between Elytis and both the earlier poets, however, is that his interest in Christian language is not allied to any central interest in what Sikelianos calls the 'Myth of Jesus'. Elytis makes no attempt to rewrite the Christian narratives or to present new images of Christ and the Virgin. Palamas and Sikelianos, in their different ways, still wrestle with Christian doctrine and Christian narrative, but in Elytis' *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί*, despite its extensive appropriation of Christian language, Christian doctrine and narrative figure only indirectly, reflected in analogical structures and narratives.

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Ἰδοὺ ἐγώ. . . μὲ δόξα θὰ περάσω:

The displacement of God

in Elytis' *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί*

4.1 Introduction

With the publication of excerpts from *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* in 1958 (followed by the publication of the whole poem in book form in 1959), Oysseus Elytis (1911-1996) ended more than a decade of silence as a poet.[1] In *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* (hereafter 'AE') one still sees the exultant lyricism and surrealist imagery of Elytis' earlier poetry, as well as the the attempt to deal directly with aspects of contemporary public reality, and in particular the War, already evident in his first post-war poem, *Ἆσμα ἡρωϊκὸ καὶ πένθιμο γιὰ τὸν χαμένο ἀνθυπολοχαγὸ τῆς Ἀλβανίας* (1945).[2] But there is another major element in AE which, if not entirely new in Elytis' poetry, had never been exploited so intensively before: the presence on practically every page of allusions to Biblical and liturgical texts. No other modern Greek poem offers anything remotely comparable to the extent and

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[1] See Elytis 1980. He had published no original poetry since «Ἡ καλωσύνη στὶς λυκοποριές» in 1947 (Vitti 1977: 20, 34, 40-41).

[2] Republished in book form 1962 (see Elytis 1971).

complexity of Elytis' linguistic involvement in AE with ecclesiastical texts, or to the variety of his modes of involvement.[3]

This involvement began, according to Elytis' own account, spontaneously, and was then pursued with conscious deliberation. The passage in which he describes how he began to compose AE during a prolonged absence from Greece (1948-1951)[4] is of such importance for an understanding of Elytis' relation to liturgical material that I shall quote it *in extenso*:

> Ἄρχισα νά γράφω, χωρίς ἄλλες ἔγνοιες μορφολογικές ἤ τεχνικές, κομμάτια ποιητικά, πού χωρίς νά τό θέλω, σά νά 'μουν medium, ἔπαιρναν χαρακτήρα ἐκκλησιαστικῶν κομματιῶν, μέ τάσεις δεητικές καί ὑμνητικές. Ἀγνοοῦσα ἐντελῶς τήν ἐκκλησιαστική φιλολογία καί ἀπό φόβο μήπως πέφτω σέ μιμήσεις ἀλλά καί ἀπό μιάν ὄψιμη περιέργεια γιά τήν τεχνική τῶν Βυζαντινῶν, παράγγειλα καί μοῦ στείλανε μιά «Συνέκδημο Ὀρθοδόξου». Πρίν ἀκόμη φτάσει στά χέρια μου τό βιβλίο, εἶχα φτιάξει μέσα μου τόν πυρήνα ἑνός ποιητικοῦ συνθετικοῦ ἔργου πού θά μποροῦσε νά βασισθεῖ στά τονικά συστήματα τῆς Βυζαντινῆς ποίησης καί κυρίως στήν *ἀρχιτεκτονική τοῦ τυπικοῦ μιᾶς Λειτουργίας ἤ Δοξολογίας*. Ἀπό τήν ἄποψη αὐτή, ἀπογοητεύθηκα ὅταν μελέτησα τά κείμενα. Ἡ ἱεροτελεστία περιεῖχε στοιχεῖα πού μόνον τό θεαματικό τους μέρος μποροῦσε νά τ' ἀξιοποιήσει. Πέρασα πολλές φάσεις. Τελικά, εἶδα ὅτι ἔπρεπε νά φτιάξω *ἕνα αὐθαίρετο ἀλλά ἐξ ἴσου αὐστηρό σύστημα ἀλληλοδιαδοχῆς εἰδῶν ποιητικῶν* καί νά μή διστάσω μπροστά στήν ἀντιφατικότητα μορφῆς καί περιεχομένου.[5]

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[3] Such involvement is not a prominent feature of Elytis' own later poetry. But see Loulakaki 1998: 27-37 for an analysis of *Ὁ Μικρὸς Ναυτίλος* (Elytis 1985b) as a dialogue with Romanos.

[4] Vitti 1977: 141-2.

[5] Kechagioglou 1995: 36. Emphases in the original. Elytis' notes on, and analyses of, the poem were intended for private circulation and their publication by Kechagioglou was unauthorized. I make occasional reference to them in this chapter. While I do not assume Elytis' comments to be the last word in matters of interpretation, they are often illuminating

When Elytis says that he was 'completely ignorant of ecclesiastical literature', he must mean that he had never *studied* the liturgical texts. He can hardly be disclaiming the experience of church services in childhood and adolescence. Without such experiences he would not have recognized the resemblance between what he was writing and the prayers and hymns of the church. The evidence of AE is that, apart from the *Synekdemos* (the layman's companion to Greek Orthodox services, which exists in several editions), Elytis also referred, in the course of composing the poem, to the Bible and to some of the kontakia of Romanos.[6] But it is as well to approach AE with the assumption that the *Synekdemos* was Elytis' principal source for liturgical material, and perhaps also an important source for Biblical material, since some 300 readings from Scripture (75% from the NT) are printed in full in the *Synekdemos*, as are more than half of the Psalms.

Elytis makes it clear that he is interested in the formal aspects of liturgical texts rather than their doctrinal content. Indeed, he speaks of a contradiction between the form and the content of the work he was

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and informative. The notes were written fairly soon after the completion of the poem, and before the second edition (1961), since they refer to the third part as «Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί» rather than «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν».

[6] Only a few short extracts from Romanos are still in use in Orthodox services and appear in the *Synekdemos* (see pp.20-21). When, in an essay written in 1975, Elytis writes about Romanos (1992: 35-56), he has in front of him the edition of Maas & Trypanis, but this was not published until 1963, four years after AE. The first three volumes (1952, 1954 and 1957) of Tomadakis' edition (1952-61) became available during the composition of the poem. Elytis may have been familiar with Romanos from one of the nineteenth-century anthologies of Byzantine hymnography such as Pitra 1867 and 1876, or Christ & Paranikas 1871; or from one of the less scholarly publications of the Greek religious presses. While Lignades (1989: *passim*) certainly overestimates the presence of Romanos in AE, Loulakaki (1998: 23-6), criticizing this aspect of Lignades, underestimates it. See p.180 n.103 above, and pp.306 n.82, 320-22, 334, 337 n.147, 341 n.158 below.

composing, and proceeds immediately to inform us that he is 'certainly not a Christian in the accepted sense'. He then refers to his ἡλιολατρεία, his ἐφηβισμός, his θαλασσινή φύση and his 'love for the verdant, for girls, for plants', and a few lines later (clarifying one aspect of the tension between form and content in AE) to the 'contradictory conjunction of priestly material with [his] sensual temperament'.[7] Elytis' subversion of Biblical and liturgical language through its importation into an erotic and sensual milieu is distinct from the eroticization of Biblical figures in the poetry of Palamas and Sikelianos, for nowhere in AE does Elytis engage directly with Biblical episodes in the manner of Palamas when he confronts the role of the myrophores in the Resurrection, or of Sikelianos when he rewrites the Anointing. Rather than assimilate the Christian content of the appropriated language into a broader conceptual context, Elytis entirely overwrites the Christian meanings with his own. In many cases it is an important part of the effect that the reader be put in mind of the content that is being overwritten, but in others this seems irrelevant. More often than his two precursors, Elytis is concerned purely with the *language* of the Bible and liturgy without regard to its content or context. In such cases it is not so much that he wants to direct the mind of the reader to the Biblical or liturgical context of his borrowings, as that he wants to present a new context in which vocabulary, modes of expression, tones of voice, syntactical and metrical structures derived from the liturgy and the Bible will definitively belong.[8] What AE attempts to set out is a 'way of holiness' which is 'outside Christianity';[9] and in this it aspires to challenge the

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[7] Kechagioglou 1995: 36-7.

[8] This is different from Sikelianos' stylistic imitation of the Gospels in «Ἄγραφον» (see pp.235-41), where Christ is the ostensible subject.

[9] Elytis' words in Kechagioglou 1995: 53. In so far as this is realized in AE, it is the realization of a challenge thrown down by Palamas through his Gypsy (pp.68-73 above) and the Apparition of the *Φλογέρα* (pp.92-3, 100 n.145), and taken up, but eventually

centrality of the Bible and the liturgy.

R.J. Schork, discussing the kontakia of Romanos, distinguishes between two different 'uses of biblical phraseology'. On the one hand there are those 'passages that the poet chose to include as *allusions* to scriptural episodes' which, though 'not directly concerned with the narrative itself' make some 'explicit or comparative contribution to the work's plot'; on the other, 'phrases [. . .] included by Romanos more for their *lyric* qualities—their contribution to the solemn, liturgical tone'.[10] A similar distinction can be made in relation to Elytis' uses of Biblical and liturgical language in AE. I prefer to call all such uses allusions, and to distinguish between *substantive* and *stylistic* allusions. Substantive allusions are those which seem to propose some parallel between personae or incidents in the poem and the figures or events of the Christian text to which they allude. Such allusions involve the appropriation not only of language but also of that to which the language refers; and the greater part of this chapter (§§4.4–4.7) is devoted to allusions of this type. In the case of stylistic allusions, there is no apparent close thematic connection between the passages in which the allusions occur and the Christian texts to which they allude. Their function is to give a Biblical or liturgical 'feel' to the passages concerned (see §4.3).

The distinction between substantive and stylistic allusion is, of course, a matter of judgement, but in general terms it may be upheld. In AE there is a third kind of reference to Biblical and liturgical texts which one might call *structural* allusion, or structural imitation (see §4.2).

A comprehensive study of Biblical and liturgical language in AE would yield sufficient material for an entire doctoral thesis, perhaps for several.[11] A number of authors have made contributions to the

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abandoned, by Sikelianos in *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* (pp.137-9 and §§3.5–3.6).

[10] Schork 1995: 14. Emphases in the original.

[11] One which has already been published (Galani 1988) certainly does not exhaust the subject (see pp.37, 277-8).

identification of Elytis' Biblical and liturgical sources.[12] On the whole, however, they note the connections between certain elements of Elytis' text and particular phrases or passages from the Bible or liturgy without exploring, except in the most general terms, the function of such allusions or borrowings in the economy of the poem. My aim, as in the chapter on Sikelianos, is to concentrate on the appropriation of ecclesiastical language to the personae of the poems, and in particular to the persona of the principal first-person voice of the poem, a persona which I propose to call 'the narrator'. This term requires some justification since many passages in «Τὰ Πάθη» and the whole of «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» do not fall within the bounds of what would ordinarily be described as narrative.

In discussing the 'variety of voices' in AE, Keeley writes of 'Elytis's use of an enlarged first-person, his most controversial voice'. He is referring to those passages where 'the first-person voice speaks for the nation more than for the self', and to the latter stage of what he calls 'a rhetorical progress from "I" as persona to "I" as metaphor for a general sensibility'.[13] Sometimes Keeley writes as though he had in mind a unitary first-person voice which speaks in different ways, as when he refers to 'those instances in which Elytis's first-person voice speaks in a more overtly personal context';[14] more often, though, he writes of these different ways of speaking as though he considered each to constitute a distinct voice, as when he writes of 'the first-person voice of the numerous intricate Odes of "The Passion", a voice that is in one sense the most subjective and rhetorical that we hear',[15] or when he says that 'the voice in the concluding

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[12] Notably Galani (1988) and Lignadis in his detailed commentary on the whole poem (1989). Other source identifications are made e.g. in Kokolis 1984 and Maronitis 1964 and 1965.

[13] Keeley 1975: 696.

[14] Keeley 1975: 696.

[15] Keeley 1975: 697-8.

section of of the poem [...] is perhaps the most consistently effective.'[16] I shall argue that there is a single persona behind all these 'voices'; or, more simply, that the entire poem must be understood as the utterance of a single persona or voice, whom I call the narrator.

Compared with Palamas' *Φλογέρα*, which I described as a layered structure of narratives within narratives, with a primary narrator (the Poet), a secondary narrator (the Flute) and a number of tertiary etc. narrators, AE is a relatively simple narrative, remaining for the most part on the first level. Much of what is narrated concerns the narrator himself, and the narrative is essentially a first-person narrative. Though the narrator's *tone* of voice varies, it is nevertheless— at least throughout «Ἡ Γένεσις» and in those passages in the Psalms and Odes of «Τὰ Πάθη» where the narrator speaks of his own past experience— quite clearly the same voice (the voice, that is, of a single persona).[17] But what of those passages in which 'I' represents the Greek nation? Keeley quotes examples from Psalms III and V,[18] but Psalms VII and VIII provide a clearer example, since they refer to the invasion and devastation of Greece, and its enemies are described as οἱ ἐχθροί *μου* (42:3, 25).[19]

In Psalm VIII the enemies are spoken of as 'dividing *my* flesh in two' and 'quarrelling over *my* liver' (43:4, 5). That this is the narrator speaking as Greece and not the voice of Greece is clear from the

[16] Keeley 1975: 699.

[17] If we cannot assume the continuity of the 'I' in these passages, then we must conclude that the poem is to a certain extent incoherent and unintelligible.

[18] AE 34:1-3 and 40:24-7 (see the next note); Keeley 1975: 696.

[19] Textual references to AE are by page and line numbers within the page, separated by a colon (the page numbering is the same in all monolingual editions of the Greek text). Throughout this chapter I use the English terms, 'Reading', 'Psalm' and 'Ode', to denote the three kinds of elements in «Τὰ Πάθη». I number the Psalms and Odes in upper and lower case Roman numerals respectively to avoid possible confusion with Biblical Psalms or the odes of liturgical canons for which I use Arabic numerals. See also p.286-7 n.46.

development within the Psalm. The initial opposition of 'I' and 'they' gives way to that of 'we' and 'they': 'we all heard and recognized [. . .] for us the bloodied iron' (43:11, 14). It is not necessary here to introduce the collective persona of the Greek people, for, despite the grammatical plural, the voice is singular and speaks as one of the Greek people, as one of 'us', as becomes clear when it addresses the rest of the people as 'brothers' (43:23): Ἀδελφοὶ μᾶς ἐγέλασαν! And this voice which speaks as one of the people cannot be distinguished from the voice that speaks as Greece. Nor is there any reason to distinguish it from the voice of the narrator.

The most obviously narrative elements in «Τὰ Πάθη» are the first four of the Readings. The First and Second Readings are about the Albanian campaign of 1940-41. The speaker is one of a group of soldiers returning to the front; and he uses the first-person plural to relate their common experiences. There is no reason to distinguish this speaker from the narrator of «Ἡ Γένεσις» and the narrative Psalms and Odes. (Elytis himself served on the Albanian Front, and these Readings are presumably based on his experience.) Although the Third and Fourth Readings, dealing with the Occupation, are in the third person, they read like the account of someone close to, if not actually involved in, the events; again there is no need to suppose a different narrating voice. The Fifth Reading approaches, indirectly through a parable, the circumstances of the Civil War of 1946-49. The tone here and the stance implied in referring to the Greek people as ὁ λαός μου (59:8, 60:9), makes the voice more readily identifiable with the narrator than the voices in the first four Readings. The same may be said of the voice in the Sixth Reading which now openly assumes the role of prophet implied in the OT context of 'my people'.

Many of the Psalms and Odes are basically narrative in mode: retrospective accounts of what the narrator, other persons or the Greek people as a whole have experienced. But some consist of, or contain, apostrophes belonging to the time of narration, which is, by definition,

present (though not necessarily a static present). These apostrophes appear to be responses to the content of the narrative and make present the process of narration as an experience of the narrator. In the final two Psalms (XVII and XVIII) the time of the retrospective narrative has caught up with and merged with the time of narration, to produce a continuous present, a narrative time which moves forward simultaneously with the narration and comes to rest, finally and definitively, at the zenith, in the concluding lines of «Τὰ Πάθη».

The narrator has at that point arrived at the static idealized present in which «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» is to be uttered. He is liberated from the past— 'worthy is the price paid' (70:27)— and the only significant temporal conditions at this point are 'now' and 'forever'. The liberation from the past is also a liberation from the ego. Not only does the narrator now abandon his narrative function (there is no narrative in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν»), he also ceases to objectify himself in the world he celebrates (there is no first-person in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν»). If the voice in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» is, as Keeley suggests, 'the most consistently effective' voice in the poem, it is because the reader can identify with it immediately without having to negotiate the specific content of the narrator's experience or his self-presentation as prophet. It is not the case that 'the poet *overtly* assumes the role of celebrant' (my emphasis), but that he does so tacitly and invisibly. Here the narrator— for the voice is surely still his— has become transparent. Freed of personal impedimenta, he can now speak both for and to the Greek people, celebrating all the contradictory elements that are of value in their world.

Conventionally critics maintain a distinction between the author of a poem and 'the poet', the persona speaking the poem, even when the poem provides this persona with no context, history or characteristics which would preclude its identification with the author. Poets themselves do not always maintain this distinction so clearly. A blurring of the distinction

between poet as author and poet as persona is evident within the poem itself— it is sufficient to refer to ΥΕΛΤΗΣ, the anagram of Ἐλύτης which appears among the 'enigmatic words' written by the 'beautiful maidens' (18:16-23)— and it makes the poem vulnerable to the charge of blasphemy, for, in the course of «Ἡ Γένεσις» and «Τὰ Πάθη», the narrator appropriates to himself words which in their Biblical or liturgical contexts belong to God or Christ, and increasingly makes himself the primary focus of truth, virtue and salvation. Such an inflation of the poetic ego may repel many readers. In Elytis' defence, one could say that the inflation of the ego is overcome at the final climax of «Τὰ Πάθη», making possible the almost self-less celebration of «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν».[20]

AE has not generally been regarded as blasphemous, but interpreted, rather, as in essence compatible with Christianity. The two most extensive commentaries on the poem, by Lignadis and Galani, share a common limitation in their handling of source material which allows both authors to avoid seeing any antagonism between AE and the Biblical and liturgical texts to which it alludes: they are content to demonstrate, through the juxtaposition of extracts from Elytis and ecclesiastical texts, the existence of common linguistic or semantic elements, without examining what Elytis has done with the language he has appropriated. In the case of Lignadis, whose commentary is general, this limitation is understandable. But in the case of Galani the almost total lack of critical probing of Elytis' relation to the liturgical material is surprising.[21]

It is evident at many points in their respective commentaries that

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[20] On the need for this qualifying 'almost' see p.354 n.191 and p.357 n.197.

[21] To the comments on Galani's approach here and in the General Introduction (see p.37) I should add that she seems to have assumed that Elytis had a much more extensive familiarity with Byzantine liturgical texts than we now know to be the case. Many of the canons she cites are no longer sung in churches and cannot be found in the *Synekdemos*; some can be found only in Migne.

both Lignadis and Galani are writing from a Christian perspective, and are predisposed to interpret Elytis' text as compatible, or at least reconcilable, with Christianity. Indicatively, Lignadis concludes his commentary with the words Τέλος καὶ τῷ Θεῷ δόξα. Elytis provides an instructive contrast to this, concluding his conceptual analysis of «Τὰ Πάθη» with a parody of such conventional pious ascription:

> δόξα τοῦ ποιητῆ καὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδας![22]

My purpose in this chapter is to show that AE is an essentially post-Christian poem (and in some respects an anti-Christian one), whose appropriation of Christian language is directed to the displacement of God by the narrator and the Greek people, and of the Kingdom of Heaven by 'this world', which to Elytis means, primarily, the world of the Aegean.

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[22] Kechagioglou 1995: 42.

4.2 Structural parallels with Biblical and liturgical texts

The involvement with Biblical and liturgical language is evident in the title of the poem, and in the titles of its three constituent parts. In the rubrics of Orthodox service books the phrase τὸ Ἄξιόν ἐστιν denotes the *megalynarion*, described by Kokolis (1984: 19) as 'one of the most familiar troparia in the Divine Liturgy', which begins Ἄξιόν ἐστιν, ὡς ἀληθῶς, μακαρίζειν σε τὴν Θεοτόκον. And it is this hymn to the Virgin which Elytis' title would first suggest to most Greek readers.[23] It is, therefore, rather surprising that the Virgin hardly figures at all in AE.[24] Here Elytis differs markedly from Palamas and Sikelianos, who devote more space in their poetry to the Virgin and other female figures from the Bible than they do to Christ or other male figures.

Given the importance of the appropriation of the Passion of Christ in the central, and by far the longest, part of the poem, «Τὰ Πάθη», it is possible that the title of the whole poem is intended to evoke, not so much the hymn to the Virgin, as the first two verses of the Second Stasis of the Good Friday Encomia:

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[23] There is in AE one probable, if somewhat circuitous, allusion to the hymn as such (as opposed to the adaptation of its opening phrase). In discussing the poem Kokolis relates (1984: 19) the legend that the Archangel Gabriel visited a hermitage on Mount Athos 'and with his finger wrote on the stone the beginning of this hymn', but he does not make the connection with the opening lines of «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν»: Ἄξιον ἐστὶ τὸ φῶς καὶ ἡ πρώτη / χαραγμένη στήν πέτρα εὐχὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (73:1-2, see also 70:23-7).

[24] There are two occurrences of the word Παναγία: in the popular name for the praying mantis (τὸ ἀλογάκι τῆς [. . .] Παναγίας, 17:36), and in a passing reference (33:9-10) which involves little more than the association of the Virgin with the sorrows and labours of women and, perhaps, the way her eyes are represented in icons (Lignadis 1989: 115). Θεοτόκος occurs once, again a passing reference (73:18); παρθένα is used twice, but only adjectivally (61:13; 82:17). Ode x of «Τὰ Πάθη», with its refrain Μακρινὴ Μητέρα Ρόδο μου Ἀμάραντο, and the Χαιρετισμοί in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» might seem to be addressed to the Panagia but I shall argue that this is not the case (see pp.316-18 below).

Ἄξιόν ἐστι (1) μεγαλύνειν σε τὸν ζωοδότην (2), τὸν ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ (3) τὰς χείρας ἐκτείναντα καὶ συντρίψαντα (4) τὸ κράτος τοῦ ἐχθροῦ.

Ἄξιόν ἐστι (1) μεγαλύνειν σε τὸν πάντων κτίστην (2)· τοῖς σοῖς γὰρ παθήμασιν (3) ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπάθειαν (4), ῥυσθέντες τῆς φθορᾶς.

By quoting them at greater length, Friar gives greater prominence to these Encomia than to the hymn to the Virgin;[25] while Galani, omitting all reference to the hymn to the Virgin, finds in the parallel sequences of the two verses above (indicated here by underlining and numbering) not only the source of Elytis' title (1), but also of the basic structure of the poem in its progression from the Creation and Nativity (2) in «Ἡ Γένεσις», through the Sacrifice of Christ (3) in «Τὰ Πάθη», to the the celebration of redemption and immortality (4) in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν».[26] This is certainly suggestive, but many other comparisons may be made between AE and liturgical structures, and Galani overstates her case.[27] Besides, there is reason to suppose that it may have been the use of the phrase ἄξιόν ἐστιν (and cognates) in the Apocalypse which first alerted Elytis to its poetic possibilities.[28]

Lignadis states that 'the organization of the Service of the Akathistos Hymn characterizes the plan and architectural conception of the poem'. He does not attempt to justify this claim, and it will not, I think, bear

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[25] Friar 1974: 25-6.

[26] Galani 1988: 62-3.

[27] 'With astonishing precision and perfection,' she claims (*ibid.*), 'Elytis observes, step by step, the Trinitarian, symbolical and ritual character of the Orthodox Liturgy' (compare Lignadis 1989: 29). Precision, however, is not (except in metrical matters) a feature of Elytis' liturgical borrowings. Programmatic though the structure of AE may be, the programme is of Elytis' own devising (Kechagioglou 1995: 43-50, 39-42).

[28] See pp.357-9.

examination. He also suggests that in a more general way AE follows the liturgical calendar from the Nativity through the Passion to the Resurrection, and this is, up to a point, obvious and undeniable. However, the symbol of the Cross is ultimately rejected, and there is no part of the poem which can easily be seen as an analogue of the Resurrection. And one cannot readily agree with Lignadis' statement that the poem 'hymns the victory of life over death',[29] since in fact it opposes such Christian antinomies and accepts life and death on equal terms.[30]

I do not think there is any ecclesiastical model for the structure of the whole of AE, but there are strong connections between certain Biblical or liturgical structures and the structures of the poem's three constituent parts.

The title of the first part of the poem, «Ἡ Γένεσις», obviously points to Genesis, and AE begins, like the Bible, with the words 'In the beginning' (13:1):

Στην αρχη τὸ φῶς Καὶ ἡ ὥρα ἡ πρώτη.

Allowing for the substitution of 'first hour' for 'first day' (*AV*) the whole of this line can be derived from the opening lines of Genesis, the account of the first day of Creation (Ἐν ἀρχῇ [. . .] ἐγένετο φῶς [. . .] ἡμέρα μία),[31] but Elytis' drastic condensation radically subverts the Biblical text because it removes God. What the Bible tells us is that in the beginning God created the light, but in Elytis the light itself is primal.

Lignadis cites John rather than Genesis as the source here,[32] and it

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[29] Lignadis 1989: 29.

[30] See p.354 n.191.

[31] Genesis 1.1-5.

[32] Lignadis 1989: 49. Galani (1988: 75-6) cites both texts and sees in Elytis a 'combination of Old Testament and New Testament light' (*ibid*. 78), missing the essential point that Elytis' 'light' is dissociated from God.

might be argued that John provides a theological justification for Elytis' assertion of the primacy of light. According to John it is the Logos (i.e. Christ) which was 'in the beginning', and John identifies the Logos not only as God and God's creative agency, but also as light;[33] and later in John Christ says, ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου.[34] In Elytis, however, τὸ φῶς is not a metaphor for God or Christ, nor an attribute or name of God. It is, rather, the light which, in Genesis, is created by God, the light which is day and not night, which literally rather than metaphorically 'enlightens every man', and whose source is the sun.

The implication of the opening lines of both Genesis and John in the first words of Elytis' poem is inevitable, since John is alluding to the Septuagint version of Genesis, establishing the role of the Logos in Creation. In Genesis God creates through speech ('Let there be light' etc.) and John names the creative speech 'Logos' ('through whom all things were made'). All the elements of the opening of Genesis are present in John: beginning, God, creation through speech, opposition of light and darkness. As John recapitulates Genesis, so too Elytis, in the opening of «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» (73:1-2), echoes the opening of «Ἡ Γένεσις»:

ΑΞΙΟΝ ΕΣΤΙ τὸ φῶς καὶ ἡ πρώτη
χαραγμένη στὴν πέτρα εὐχὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου

Furthermore, 'man's first prayer engraved on the rock' is closely related to the second and third lines of «Ἡ Γένεσις», where, at 'the first hour', 'the lips still in the clay try out the things of the world' (13:2-3). In evoking, at key points in his own text, not only Genesis and John but also imitating John's evocation of Genesis, Elytis seems to be in competition with the

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[33] John 1.1, 3-4, 9.

[34] John 8.12. This saying is particularly familiar to Orthodox churchgoers, since in the many icons in which Christ holds an open book these are the words most frequently inscribed on the pages.

Bible, like Sikelianos rewriting 'the Myth of Jesus' and composing his 'Fifth Gospel'.

«Ἡ Γένεσις» consists of seven Paragraphs which Elytis says 'correspond to the stages of creation, to the stages of growing up (τῆς ἡλικίας), to the stages of the day and to the stages of human experience'.[35] Elytis seems to be speaking loosely here, having in mind such things as the Seven Days of Creation and Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man,[36] for it does not prove possible with any of these models to allocate a specific stage to each of the seven Paragraphs of «Ἡ Γένεσις». In the first Creation narrative (Genesis 1.1-2.3) there are, in any case, ten stages spread over six days, followed by a day of rest, though it is possible to construe the second Creation narrative (Genesis 2.4-24) as involving seven stages. In fact Elytis is not, in general, interested in creating structures with thoroughgoing systematic correspondence to a source text. One finds only intermittent correspondence, for his structures have their own internal logic, and his treatment of sources is essentially wilful.

There are, nevertheless, occasional instances of thematic and numerical correspondence between the paragraphs of «Ἡ Γένεσις» and the days of creation. Elytis' creator is the persona designated by the pronoun Αὐτός. In Paragraph 2 the earth of his creation is described as στεριὲς μεγάλες (14: 25), while on the second day of creation in Genesis God creates 'the firmament (στερέωμα) in the midst of the waters'. This 'firmament' is not, of course, land, but the vault of the sky. Nevertheless, there is a verbal connection between στερέωμα and στεριές, and as the στερέωμα of Genesis later receives its stars,[37] so Elytis' στεριὲς μεγάλες receive their 'stars' in the form of flowers: τῆς γῆς τ' ἀστέρια— an

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35 Kechagioglou 1995: 38.

36 *As You Like It*, II.vii.139-66.

37 Genesis 1.6-7, 16-18.

extension of the word-play (15:28-9).

Paragraph 3 of «Ἡ Γένεσις» offers a more substantial instance of numerical correpondence with Genesis, where, on the third day of Creation,

> εἶπεν ὁ Θεός· συναχθήτω τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ὑποκάτω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἰς συναγωγὴν μίαν, καὶ ὀφθήτω ἡ ξηρά. καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως. [. . .] καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ξηρὰν γῆν καὶ τὰ συστήματα τῶν ὑδάτων ἐκάλεσε θαλάσσας.[38]

In Paragraph 3 (16:9-11) we find the creation of sea and islands (the greater land masses came into being in Paragraph 2):

> Τότε εἶπε καὶ γεννήθηκεν ἡ θάλασσα
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Καὶ στὴ μέση της ἔσπειρε κόσμους μικρούς [. . .].

In the image of the *sowing* of islands there is another link with the third day of Creation, when the gathering together of the waters and the emergence of land was followed by the creation of plants:

> ἐξήνεγκεν ἡ γῆ βοτάνην χόρτου σπεῖρον σπέρμα κατὰ γένος καὶ καθ' ὁμοιότητα.[39]

These vestiges of numerical correspondence between the seven paragraphs of «Ἡ Γένεσις» and the seven days of creation suggest that Elytis may have toyed with the idea of a more comprehensive analogical structure, but in the event the Biblical creation narratives play a fairly minor role in shaping «Ἡ Γένεσις». More extensive use of structural models from the Christian tradition can be observed in the other two parts of the poem.

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[38] Genesis 1.9-10.

[39] Genesis 1.12

In his description of the development of AE, Elytis refers to the idea of a poetic work 'based on the accentual systems of Byzantine poetry and particularly on the architecture of the *typikon* of a Liturgy or Doxology'.[40] Two quite separate compositional strategies are indicated here, and both may be observed in «Τὰ Πάθη». The first strategy is seen in the dependence of Elytis' twelve Odes on the metrical system of the major genres of Byzantine hymnography (the kontakion and the canon),[41] and has been studied by Mitsakis.[42] Both Mitsakis and Lignadis discuss the dependence of Odes viii and xii of «Τὰ Πάθη» on specific liturgical pattern-stanzas.[43] The use of a technique derived from Byzantine hymnography does not in itself imply an appropriative relation to Orthodox tradition, but in the case of Ode viii we can say that even its metre, based on the syllabic count and accentual pattern of the Third Stasis of the Good Friday Encomia, is a part of the extensive and multi-faceted appropriation of Christ's Passion in «Τὰ Πάθη».[44] The second compositional strategy, whereby the overall structure of «Τὰ Πάθη» is based on a particular liturgical model, is of broader significance in the appropriation of the Passion.

Elytis speaks of basing the poem on the *typikon* ('order of service' in this context) 'of a Liturgy or Doxology'. In fact the closest liturgical model for the structure of «Τὰ Πάθη» is found in the Ἀκολουθία τῶν Ἁγίων Παθῶν (or τῶν Παθῶν τοῦ Κυρίου), which, though strictly speaking the Orthros of Good Friday, is performed on the evening of Maundy Thursday. To appreciate the parallel it is necessary first to outline

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[40] See p.269.

[41] See pp.20-21.

[42] Mitsakis 1982: 299-301, 308-16, 319-35.

[43] Mitsakis 1982: 312-13, 328-9, 333-4; Lignadis 1989: 183-4, 230.

[44] See p.333. On Ode xii see p.296.

Elytis' structure. «Τὰ Πάθη» consists of three 'units',[45] each of which contains six Psalms, four Odes and two Readings arranged in the following symmetrical pattern (first unit):

Ψαλμός Α΄
Ψαλμός Β΄
Ὠδή α΄
ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ ΠΡΩΤΟ
Ὠδή β΄
Ψαλμός Γ΄
Ψαλμός Δ΄
Ὠδή γ΄
ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟ
Ὠδή δ΄
Ψαλμός Ε΄
Ψαλμός ΣΤ΄.

The numbering system is continuous through all three units, so that the second unit begins

Ψαλμός Ζ΄
Ψαλμός Η΄
Ὠδή ε΄
ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ ΤΡΙΤΟ.

and the third unit ends

ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ ΕΚΤΟ
Ὠδή ιβ΄
Ψαλμός ΙΖ΄
Ψαλμός ΙΗ΄.[46]

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[45] Ἐνότητες is the term Elytis uses in his notes (Kechagioglou 1995: *passim*).

[46] I have used upper and lower case to differentiate the term ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ, which occurs in the headings of the text, from the terms Ψαλμός and Ὠδή, which do not, though they are used by Elytis in his commentary on the poem (Kechagioglou 1995: *passim*). In the text of the poem, the Psalms and Odes are simply headed by Greek ordinal

Ψαλμός, ὠδή and ἀνάγνωσμα are all liturgical terms. The Psalms are a major ingredient in most Orthodox services, and many services include a Canon made up of eight or nine Odes. The most prominent use of the term ἀνάγνωσμα is in the Vespers which precedes the Liturgy on Saturday in Holy Week; but there the fifteen ἀναγνώσματα (numbered α′-ιε′) are recited in a continuous sequence without intervening material. The Ἀκολουθία τῶν Ἁγίων Παθῶν contains twelve readings which, since they are all from the Gospels, are each headed by the specific term εὐαγγέλιον rather than the generic ἀνάγνωσμα. This service begins with the Ἑξάψαλμος of Orthros, in which six psalms (denoted only by their numbers in the Septuagint) are sung while the priest secretly recites twelve prayers. The numbers of the Psalms and Prayers are the same (six and twelve) as those of the Readings and Odes respectively in «Τὰ Πάθη»; and the way in which the prayers are headed (Εὐχὴ πρώτη, Εὐχὴ δευτέρα, etc.) provides a model for Elytis' headings for the Readings. The Ἑξάψαλμος is followed by the *troparion* «Ὅτε οἱ ἔνδοξοι μαθηταί» (about Judas' betrayal of Christ). This *troparion* is sung three times, and after that the structure of the Service assumes a regular and repeated pattern, whose principal elements, Gospel readings and antiphons, are numbered and arranged as follows:

Α′ ΕΥ̓ΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ
Ἀντίφωνον α′
Ἀντίφωνον β′
Ἀντίφωνον γ′
Β′ ΕΥ̓ΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ
Ἀντίφωνον δ′
Ἀντίφωνον ε′

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numbers in upper and lower case respectively. Some commentators, notably Lignadis (1989: *passim*), use the term Ἆσμα in place of Ὠδή.

'Αντίφωνον στ'
Γ' ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ
'Αντίφωνον ζ'
etc.

The pattern is repeated as far as the sixth *evangelion*— note that there are six readings in Elytis' «Τὰ Πάθη»— after which there is no regular pattern, material of different types being inserted among the remaining readings.[47]

From the first to the sixth *evangelion*, both the numbering system (two interlaced series of Greek ordinal numbers in upper and lower case) and the basic structure of the 'Ακολουθία τῶν 'Αγίων Παθῶν are similar to those of «Τὰ Πάθη». The main differences are that Elytis' structure has three basic types of elements, not two; that it is divided into three structurally identical sections; and that there are four or six units (psalms and odes) between each of the readings rather than three; and that he introduces a third series of numbers (those of the Readings), though these are expressed in a form related to the numbering of the prayers in the 'Εξάψαλμος with which the 'Ακολουθία begins.

While the structure of «Τὰ Πάθη» is not a slavish copy of the structure of the 'Ακολουθία τῶν 'Αγίων Παθῶν, the general similarity of the two is clear. Each consists of a series of prose readings separated by groups of poetic units— intended to be sung in the case of the 'Ακολουθία, and in the case of «Τὰ Πάθη» described by their author in terms ('psalm' and 'ode') suggestive of singing. Elytis' structural pattern is both more rigid and more symmetrical than that of the 'Ακολουθία. This structural imitation is another dimension of Elytis' appropriation of the

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47 The pattern changes slightly between the fifth and sixth *evangelia*, since the fifteenth antiphon, which is sung as the priest brings the image of the Crucified from the sanctuary, is extended by repetitions and the insertion of *troparia*.

Passion.

«Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» is the most tightly structured of the three sections of AE. Like «Τὰ Πάθη» it consists of three 'units',[48] though the divisions between them are not marked in the text. Each unit is divided into either three or four sub-units, which consist either of six quatrains followed by a triplet or (in the case of the last sub-unit in each unit) of five quatrains followed by seven couplets. Many of the quatrains begin with the words ΑΞΙΟΝ ΕΣΤΙ (always capitalized). Each of the triplets (seven in all) consists entirely of proper names, and the preceding quatrain in each case begins with the generic term for the entities named in the triplet (winds, islands, flowers, girls, boats, mountains, trees). In the first unit both lines in each of the seven concluding couplets begin with the word Χαῖρε, and the couplets are modelled on the Χαιρετισμοί of the Akathistos Hymn. In the couplets of the second unit the initial word is Αὐτός, while in those of the third Νῦν and Αἰέν alternate.

Within this structure the only variation is in line length, and this is severely limited, most lines being between ten and thirteen syllables in length, with thirteen-syllable lines predominant. These self-imposed constraints would have been more formidable for Elytis were it not for the unusual syntactical simplicity of «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν», which is essentially a list, a list of things which are all either complements of Ἄξιον ἐστί, or attributes of Αὐτός, Νὺν or Αἰέν (with the copula implicit), or of the female figure to whom the Χαῖρε is addressed. The text is dominated by nouns in the nominative; and finite verbs other than ἐστί occur only in subordinate (principally relative) clauses.

As a list or catalogue of all in the world that is worthy of praise—and the liturgical phrase Ἀξιόν ἐστιν is always associated with verbs of

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[48] Again ἑνότητες is the term Elytis uses in his notes.

praising[49]— «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» has a Biblical and liturgical counterpart.

Reference has already been made to the fifteen readings in the Vespers for Saturday in Holy Week, and to the fact that they follow each other without a break and could not, therefore, have influenced the structure of «Τὰ Πάθη». However, the relationship between these fifteen lessons as a whole and the Ὕμνος τῶν Τριῶν Παίδων which follows them is reflected in the relationship between «Τὰ Πάθη» and «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν». The 'Song of the Three Holy Children', or Benedicite, as it is commonly known in the West, appears to have provided the seminal idea for «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν».

The last of the fifteen readings in the Vespers consists of Daniel 3.1-23 and verses 1-33 of the Προσευχὴ Ἀζαρίου καὶ ὕμνος τῶν Τριῶν, which in the Septuagint is inserted between Daniel 3.23 and 3.24. The Benedicite itself, verses 34-65 of the Προσευχὴ καὶ ὕμνος, is not part of the reading but is sung immediately after it in an abbreviated form. The first part of the 'hymn' which Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Azariah) sang within the 'burning fiery furnace' (which is different in form from the part known as the Benedicite) is included in the reading. It consists of five sentences, the first beginning Εὐλογητὸς εἶ, and the other four Εὐλογημένος εἶ, offering a syntactical parallel to the repeated Ἄξιον ἐστί of «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν». More significant, though, is the influence of the structure and content of the Benedicite itself. It begins

> Εὐλογεῖτε, πάντα τὰ ἔργα Κυρίου, τὸν Κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

This is a formula which, in the Septuagint, is repeated thirty-two times, the words πάντα τὰ ἔργα Κυρίου being replaced by a succession of particular 'works of the Lord' (οὐρανοί, ἄγγελοι τοῦ Κυρίου, ἥλιος

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[49] See pp.279-80, 293-4.

καὶ σελήνη, etc.), ending with the names of the singers themselves. The liturgical version is shorter with only seventeen repetitions of the formula, which after the first verse is slightly modified and sung antiphonally by lector and choir (the choral refrain is invariable):

Lector: Εὐλογεῖτε, ἄγγελοι Κυρίου, οὐρανοὶ Κυρίου, τὸν Κύριον.

Choir: Τὸν Κύριον ὑμνεῖτε, καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε εἰς πάντας τοὺς αἰῶνας.

The reduction in length in the liturgical version is achieved, as illustrated here, by the combination, in most of the repetitions of the formula, of 'works' or groups of 'works' from two or three verses of the Septuagint.[50] The last verse of the liturgical version is a Christian addition to the Jewish 'hymn':

Εὐλογεῖτε, Ἀπόστολοι, Προφῆται καὶ Μάρτυρες Κυρίου, τὸν Κύριον.

Within the recurrent fixed formula of the Benedicite, the variable phrases form a list of elements of the natural world, including individuals and categories of persons. «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» can be seen as a complex form developed from this simple, repetitive structure. Considering its length, verbal repetition is relatively limited in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν», restricted mainly to the key phrase Ἄξιον ἐστί, which occurs eighteen times, and the key words in the groups of couplets which conclude each of the three units. Otherwise, the repetitions are of a different order, a matter of sequences of stanza types and metrical patterns.

Many of the elements of the world singled out in the Benedicite also appear in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν». While this is hardly surprising, some of the

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50 The only Septuagint group omitted is ψῦχος καὶ καῦμα (verse 48, *LXX*), but both its terms also occur in vv. 43-44.

parallels do indicate Elytis' awareness of the text of the Benedicite. Compare, for example, Elytis' Ἄξιον ἐστὶ τὸ κᾶμα (74:16) with Εὐλογεῖτε, πῦρ καὶ καῦμα (Benedicite verse 43);[51] or Elytis' oxymoron στὸ ψύχος τοῦ ἥλιου (78:10) with the Biblical pairing of ψῦχος with καύσων (v.44) or with καῦμα (v.48). And Elytis' couplet (83:17-18),

Αὐτὸς τὸ σκότος καὶ αὐτὸς ἡ ὄμορφη ἀφροσύνη
Αὐτὸς τῶν ὄμβρων τοῦ φωτὸς ἡ ἐαροσύνη.

not only uses the same words as the Benedicite for the contrast of light and darkness (φῶς καὶ σκότος, v.47), but also the archaic ὄμβρος from verse 41 (πᾶς ὄμβρος καὶ δρόσος).[52]

Most of the significant words in the variable parts of the Benedicite are generic nouns, often with the universal qualifiers πᾶς and πάντα. Elytis, however, is concerned with particularities, with specific observed details. In the Benedicite there are two exceptions to the generic nature of the nouns: Ἰσραήλ (v.60) and Ἀνανία, Αζαρία, Μισαήλ (v.65). The latter could be seen as a protoype for the groups of three proper names in each line of Elytis' seven triplets.

Apart from the greater complexity of «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν», both structurally and in the relations it traces between the elements of the world, the fundamental difference between Elytis' text and the Benedicite— and its importance cannot be overstated— is, on one level, a grammatical one: the difference between nominative and vocative. The Benedicite addresses the elements of the world, calling on them to 'bless the Lord', but in «Τὸ

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[51] Here and below references to the Benedicite are to the verses of the Septuagint text of the Προσευχή καὶ ὕμνος, numbered separately from the third chapter of Daniel. For editions in which the verse numbering of Daniel 3 is not interrupted add 23 to the verse number given.

[52] For further examples see AE 73:1-4 in which six of the nine nouns are part of the vocabulary of the Benedicite (compare vv. 39, 47, 53, 58-9).

Δοξαστικόν» it is the elements of the world which are themselves the objects of the narrator's praise. In this extended final vision of AE the phenomenal world has displaced God, in keeping with the promise of Ode xi of «Τὰ Πάθη» (64:25-6):

"Η θά 'ναι αὐτὸς ❀ ὁ κόσμος ἢ δὲ θά 'ναι
Ὁ Τοκετός ❀ ἡ Θέωσις τὸ 'Αεί.

The notion of eternity (τὸ 'Αεί) is not abolished in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν», but has become a property or condition of the world. The final set of couplets, which alternate 'now' and 'forever', is introduced by the idea of discrimination, of knowing (87:16)

ποιὸ τὸ "νῦν.. καὶ ποιὸ τὸ "αἰὲν.. τοῦ κόσμου.

The things characterized in the couplets as αἰέν either involve a greater degree of human consciousness than those characterized as νῦν, or else belong to the 'cosmos' in the sense of 'universe' rather than to the 'world'. But in the final couplet the divine is drawn into the realm of 'now', while this world, described again in terms drawn from «Ἡ Γένεσις», is 'forever' (88:9-11):

Νῦν ἡ ταπείνωση τῶν Θεῶν Νῦν ἡ σποδὸς τοῦ 'Ανθρώπου
Νῦν Νῦν τὸ μηδέν

καὶ Αἰὲν ὁ κόσμος ὁ μικρός, ὁ Μέγας!

If one approaches «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» not through the Benedicite but through the liturgical significance of the phrase "Αξιόν ἐστι— and in the first edition «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» was called «Τὸ "Αξιον 'Εστί»— one reaches the same conclusion about the displacement of the divine. The liturgical hymn to the Virgin known as 'The Axion Esti' begins

"Αξιόν ἐστιν, ὡς ἀληθῶς, μακαρίζειν σὲ τὴν Θεοτόκον,

and the Second Stasis of the Good Friday Encomia.

> Ἄξιόν ἐστι μεγαλύνειν σὲ τὸν ζωοδότην [. . .] Ἄξιόν ἐστι μεγαλύνειν σε τὸν πάντων κτίστην.

In Elytis' repeated ΑΞΙΟΝ ΕΣΤΙ the dependent verbs μακαρίζειν or μεγαλύνειν (but in their passive forms) are, as it were, understood (since the phrase is so ineluctably bound up with the idea of praising);[53] and σέ, referring either to the Virgin as God-Bearer or to Christ as Giver of Life and Creator, is replaced by the various elements of the world.

There seems to be no clear and consistent distinction in meaning between Δοξαστικόν and Δοξολογία. As a descriptor of a liturgical genre Δοξολογία is far more common. The most familiar example of the use of Δοξαστικόν is probably the Ἐωθινὰ Δοξαστικά at the end of Orthros. There is, however, no discernible relationship between these and Elytis' «Δοξαστικόν». But the same cannot be said of the long Δοξολογία which immediately follows them, since this, like Elytis' «Δοξαστικόν», begins with light:

> Δόξα σοι τῷ δείξαντι τὸ φῶς.[54]

If one compares this with Elytis' Ἄξιον ἐστί τὸ φῶς, one sees, once again, the displacement of God. The light itself has taken the place of the God 'who shows forth the light'. As already noted, the same displacement takes place at the beginning of «Ἡ Γένεσις» where God's first creative act, Ἐν ἀρχῇ [. . .] εἶπεν ὁ Θεός· γενηθήτω φῶς· καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς, is

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[53] This can be further illustrated from the prayer which precedes the Τρισάγιος Ὕμνος in the Liturgy of John Chrysostom, where ἐστι is understood: Ἄξιον καὶ δίκαιον σὲ ὑμνεῖν, σὲ εὐλογεῖν, σὲ αἰνεῖν, σοὶ εὐχαριστεῖν, σὲ προσκυνεῖν.

[54] The same Doxology also follows the Good Friday Encomia.

reduced by Elytis to Στὴν ἀρχὴ τὸ φῶς.

In short, then, critical appreciation of the structural parallels between AE and Biblical and liturgical texts only serves to emphasize the conceptual distance between them.

4.3
Stylistic imitation of Biblical and liturgical texts

Some of the allusions by which the structural parallels discussed in the §4.2 are articulated involve stylistic imitation— the use of the words Στὴν ἀρχή at the beginning of two of the three parts of the poem for example— but they are not mere stylistic allusions, since they propose some relationship between the poem and the source texts. The same may be said of the first line of Ode xii (68:1),

Ανοιξω τὸ στόμα μου ❀ κι ἀναγαλλιάζει τὸ πέλαγος

which is a variation on the opening words of its metrical model (the *eirmos* of Ode 1 of the Akathistos Canon):

'Ανοίξω τὸ στόμα μου καὶ πληρωθήσεται Πνεύματος.

This, I would argue, is a case of substantive allusion, since the adaptation proposes a significant semantic relationship between the two texts. The verbal substitution of 'the sea rejoices' for 'it shall be filled with the Spirit', as the consequence of the speaker's opening his mouth, entails two substantive changes. The speaker is no longer a worshipper and passive recipient of a divine gift; instead he is in a God-like position, making utterances to which the sea responds. And the sea's taking the place of the divine Spirit is consistent with the displacement of God by the elements of the natural world evident in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» viewed in relation to the Benedicite.

The phrase Τὶς ἡμέρες ἐκεῖνες, with which both the Second and Third Readings begin (37:1, 45:1), is, on the other hand, a purely stylistic allusion. This is the equivalent of the Biblical and liturgical formula, ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις. The latter occurs more than forty times in the

Septuagint and more than fifteen times in the NT, while the singular form (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ) is far more frequent, as is the less precise phrase, ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ. In liturgical texts, most readings from the Gospels begin with the phrase, Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ, the syntax of the NT text being altered when necessary to accommodate it.[55] In the Ἀκολουθία τῶν Ἁγίων Παθῶν, whose structure is, as we have seen, closely related to that of «Τὰ Πάθη», ten consecutive Gospel readings (all but the first and the last) begin in this way. In the case of readings from the Acts of the Apostles the normal opening formula is the phrase adapted by Elytis, ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις.[56] The effect of Elytis' use of this phrase at the beginning of two of his Ἀναγνώσματα is to put the Orthodox reader in mind of Biblical Ἀναγνώσματα heard in church.

In the case of the Second Reading the allusion goes beyond the formulaic opening phrase. In the First Reading the narrator described his regiment's return to the Albanian Front, and the Second Reading resumes the story (37:1-2):

> Τις ημερες εκεινες ἔφτασαν ἐπιτέλους ὕστερα ἀπὸ τρεῖς σωστὲς ἑβδομάδες οἱ πρῶτοι στὰ μέρη μας ἡμιονηγοί.

The muleteers brought supplies of herrings and halva. The implication of the opening sentence is that for the first three weeks the soldiers had been short of food. In a significant number of cases the Biblical phrase, ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις, introduces (or is part of) a passage referring to war,[57] or to food or the lack of food or fasting.[58] In two of the latter passages

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[55] Where the formula is not applied it is usually because the selected Gospel extract begins with some other temporal reference.

[56] See for example the ἀπόστολοι for Prime and Terce on the feast of the Epiphany.

[57] Judges 20.28; I Kings (I Samuel) 4.1, 8.18, 28.1; II Chronicles 21.8; Judith 1.5; Jeremiah 27(50).23; Ezekiel 38.17; I Maccabees 9.24, 11.20, 13.43.

[58] Deuteronomy 26.3; Judges 18.31 (19.1); Nehemiah 13.15; Daniel 10.2; Mark 8.1; Luke

there are references to asses (beasts of burden like Elytis' mules), and in one to the loading of foodstuffs on asses.[59] It is unlikely that Elytis was aware of these curious facts, but one of the passages, from Daniel, is without doubt implicated in Elytis' text, since it brings together the formulaic phrase with the lack of food (voluntary in Daniel's case) for a period of 'three weeks of days' (compare Elytis' τρεῖς σωστὲς ἑβδομάδες, 'three whole weeks'):

> ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἐγὼ Δανιὴλ ἤμην πενθῶν τρεῖς ἑβδομάδας ἡμερῶν· ἄρτον ἐπιθυμιῶν οὐκ ἔφαγον, καὶ κρέας καὶ οἶνος οὐκ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸ στόμα μου, καὶ ἄλειμμα οὐκ ἠλειψάμην ἕως πληρώσεως τριῶν ἑβδομάδων ἡμερῶν.[60]

There are other echoes of Daniel in the Second Reading. While the muleteers are unloading the supplies the sound of an approaching shell is heard (38:6-7):

> Καὶ εὐθὺς ἀκούστηκε στὸν ἀέρα ἡ σκοτεινὴ σφυριγματιὰ τῆς ὀβίδας ποὺ ἔφτανε. Καὶ πέσαμε ὅλοι καταγῆς μπρούμυτα, πάνω στὶς σκάρπες.

The second sentence, despite the demoticism of Elytis' lexical choices, has much the same elements as the description in the Septuagint of Daniel's reaction to the supernatural being who appears to him after his fast of 'three weeks of days':

> καὶ ἤκουσα τὴν φωνὴν τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἀκοῦσαί με αὐτοῦ ἤμην κατανενυγμένος, καὶ τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν.[61]

4.2, 5.35

[59] Judges 19.3, 19.10; Nehemiah 13.15.

[60] Daniel 10.2-3.

[61] Daniel 10.9.

Or the description of his reaction, in an earlier, parallel passage, to the appearance of the angel Gabriel:

πίπτω ἐπὶ πρόσωπόν μου ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν.[62]

Falling 'on [one's] face on the ground' is an expression which occurs several times in the OT,[63] while the simpler falling 'on [one's] face' is much more common. In most instances it is a response of awe and worship, and there may be an element of substantive allusion in Elytis' use of a parallel expression. The shell is described as 'the Invisible' (γνωρίζαμε ἀπόξω πιὰ τὰ σημάδια τοῦ 'Αόρατου, 38:8), and 'Αόρατος is an epithet of God, occurring in liturgical texts but derived from Paul.[64] Elytis may have consciously extended the reference of what in origin was a soldiers' mildly blasphemous joke by linking it to the supernatural apparitions of Daniel.

It is clear that an interest in the language of Daniel lies behind the composition of the Second Reading. But, with the possible exception of the association of the soldiers falling to the ground with the application of an epithet of God to a weapon of destruction, reference to the content of Daniel does not further the interpretation of Elytis' text. The use of phrases echoing Daniel simply contributes to the Biblical feel of the passage.

In the Fourth Reading the account of the execution of the partisan, Lefteris, clearly reflects elements of the accounts of the Passion of Christ,[65] while the material of the Fifth is explicitly Biblical (the Parable of the Sheepfold) and the Sixth aspires to the apocalyptic tone of Biblical prophecy. In the Second and Third Readings, though, it is only the style

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[62] Daniel 8.18.

[63] Joshua 5.14, 7.6; Judges 13.20; I Kings (I Samuel) 14.4; II Kings (II Samuel) 14.4, 14.22.

[64] Colossians 1.15; I Timothy 1.17; Hebrews 11.27.

[65] See p.329 n.130.

which is Biblical. The opening Τις ἡμέρες ἐκεῖνες, paratactic construction and the excessive use of initial καί give a superficial feel of a liturgical ἀνάγνωσμα.[66] These two Readings are Biblical in content only to the extent that, like much of the OT, they are concerned with war; and they are radically unbiblical in not being concerned with God.

It is only the poetic prose of the Readings which offers the opportunity of extended stylistic imitation of the Bible, but there are many minor examples in the Psalms and Odes where phrasing or lexical choice suggests ecclesiastical language without necessarily alluding to any specific text. The characterization of invading enemies as πετεινά and θηρία in Psalm VIII (43:3) is an obvious instance of the use of Biblical vocabulary. Elytis himself points to an example of stylistic imitation in Psalm II which does involve a particular Biblical source. Though he refers only to imitating the 'beautiful rhythm' of verses from the Song of Songs,[67] the Biblical pairing of plant names such as νάρδος καὶ κρόκος is reflected in Elytis' δάφνες καὶ βάγια (28:21) and several other such pairs;[68] and the Biblical phrase, μετὰ πάντων πρώτων μύρων, is echoed in a total of nine phrases beginning μὲ τὰ πρῶτα.[69]

The use of elements of Biblical style in passages which have little to do with Biblical concerns or values may, in its own way, be as appropriative as the more substantive appropriations discussed in later

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[66] In the Second Reading roughly half the sentences begin with καί, and in the other Readings the proportion is similar (except for the First where it is only about one in six). It is generally agreed that the style of the Readings is pastiche, imitating not only the Bible, but also the prose of Makriyannis or Solomos (e.g. Maronitis 1965:19, and Alexiou in Solomos 1994: 479).

[67] Kechagioglou 1995: 53-4; Song of Songs 4.13-14. This rhythmical imitation, like the metrical imitations of the Odes (see pp.286, 297), can be seen as a kind of stylistic imitation.

[68] See 28:12, 17, 22; and also 28:4, 8 (pairs of marine creatures)

[69] 28:9, 10, 11, 18, 19, 20, 27, 28, 29.

sections of this chapter, and it certainly prepares the ground for them. Elytis, it seems, recognizes a certain inherent poetic value in the language of Scripture and Orthodox services. Its appeal to him is evident in his description of the genesis of «Τὰ Παθη»,[70] and he perhaps felt the need to come to terms with it because of its authority within the Greek cultural tradition. One also gets some sense of this from Psalm II, which begins, Τὴ γλώσσα μου ἔδωσαν ἑλληνική (28:1). Three stages of the Greek language are clearly indicated in this Psalm by the name Homer (28:2-3), the liturgical phrase Δόξα Σοι (28:19-20) and the 'first words of the Hymn' (28:28-9), not a liturgical hymn, but Solomos' *Hymn to Liberty*, whose 'first words' are adapted as the last line of the following Ode i (29:17-18). It is primarily with Greek as a language of poetry that Elytis is concerned here, and he views ecclesiastical language as part of his poetic heritage. Later he was to write about Romanos as a fellow poet in terms which suggest that the poetry of a religious text may be apprehended apart from, and without regard to, its theological content.[71] Through stylistic imitation in AE, Elytis attempts to reclaim for secular use, for his own 'way of holiness outside of Christianity', some of the riches of ecclesiastical language, while ignoring, or even implicitly denying, the beliefs and values associated with that language in its original context.

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[70] See p.269.

[71] Elytis 1992: 35-56. For a perceptive study of Elytis' relation to Romanos see Loulakaki 1998.

4.4 Godlike attributes of Αὐτός, Ἐκεῖνος and Ἐγώ in «Ἡ Γένεσις»

We have seen evidence of Elytis' attempt to affect, here and there in AE, a Biblical style and, more generally, to imitate Biblical and liturgical genres and structures. The poem also contains a large number of substantive allusions to Biblical and liturgical texts whose most notable effect is to associate the personae of the poem with God or Christ. Among these personae I include the collective persona of the Greek people, which plays a substantial role in «Τὰ Πάθη», and Lefteris whose position is in some sense intermediate between the Greek people and the narrator. Lefteris is a heroic representative of the Greek people; but as a natural leader who speaks and acts on his own authority he is a counterpart, in the sphere of action, to the poet-narrator.[72] I shall, however, devote most space to appropriations of Christ by the narrator, for it is in these that Elytis shows himself to be pursuing the elevation of the poetic ego through the assimilation of divine attributes, which we observed as a somewhat ambivalent process in Palamas, and as major element in the poetic project of Sikelianos.

The persona designated by the pronoun Αὐτός, who dominates «Ἡ Γένεσις» and reappears briefly in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν», is so closely bound up with the persona of the narrator that the appropriations to Αὐτός may be regarded as appropriations to the narrator. Both Αὐτός and the narrator are projections of the poetic ego, of 'the Poet'. Αὐτός, who, it is evident from the very first page of the poem, has a role which is in some respects Christ-like, represents the fully realized Poet, omnipotent and self-authenticating, whom the narrator from the moment of birth is striving, and is destined, to become. A third persona, designated Ἐκεῖνος, is also a

[72] See particularly AE 37:21–38:38 .

part of this equation, and in this section I propose to examine the Godlike or Christ-like attributes of Αὐτός, Ἐκεῖνος and Ἐγώ (the narrator) and the interrelations of these three personae as these are articulated through appropriations of Christian language.

Elytis tells us that after he returned to Greece in 1951, with a draft of «Τὰ Πάθη» but 'with no idea what the Introduction or the Epilogue might be', an elderly uncle related to him some details of the family history and in these he 'found the key to the first part' (i.e. «Ἡ Γένεσις»).[73] The 'key' was, apparently, the 'remote ancestor' on his father's side of the family who 'died a martyr and was proclaimed a saint, Saint Theodore of Mytilene'.[74] This ancestor makes a brief appearance in Paragraph 7 of «Ἡ Γένεσις» (22:10-13, 19):

> Μιὰ στιγμὴ μοῦ ἐφάνηκε θωροῦσα Ἐκεῖνον
> ποὺ τὸ αἷμα του ἔδωσε νὰ σαρκωθῶ
> τὸν τραχὺ τοῦ Ἁγίου δρόμο ν' ἀνεβαίνει
> μιὰ φορὰν ἀκόμη
> . . . . . .
> ἐξουσία καὶ κλῆρος τῆς γενιᾶς μου.

Whilst Lignadis was clearly wrong to make an unequivocal identification with Christ,[75] the initial capital of Ἐκεῖνον and the reference to the giving of blood will inevitably bring Christ to mind.[76] Keeley and Savidis lean too far in the other direction, stating baldly that 'the allusion is not to Christ but to an eighteenth-century martyr'.[77] If Elytis did not intend his readers

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[73] Kechagioglou 1995: 37.

[74] Kechagioglou 1995: 53.

[75] Lignadis 1989: 87. In an end note added to the 2nd edition of his commentary Lignadis acknowledges this mistake (*ibid*. 303)

[76] Christ speaks of his body as 'given' (διδόμενον) but of his blood as 'poured out' (ἐκχυνόμενον) (Luke 22.19-20).

[77] Keeley & Savidis 1980: 95.

to be put in mind of Christ at this point, then we must say that he has miscalculated in choosing the terms in which to express what he calls an 'allusion to something entirely personal'.[78] But the indications are that the evocation of Christ was not accidental.

If the clause, πού τὸ αἷμα του ἔδωσε, suggests an association between Christ and Ἐκεῖνος, the one which follows, νὰ σαρκωθῶ, links the speaker (the narrator) even more forcefully with Christ. Early Christian writers, developing the theology of Incarnation on the basis of John's formulation, ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, began to use the middle and passive forms of the verb σαρκόω in a new sense, traditionally rendered in English as 'be made flesh'. In this sense the verb is restricted almost entirely to a theological context where its only possible subject is a name or title denoting Christ. Its most familiar use is in the Nicene Creed, where Christ is described as κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ σαρκωθέντα. Thus Elytis' narrator appropriates to himself a word which belongs essentially to Christ— a striking instance but, as we shall see, by no means unique in AE.

If Elytis' family saint did indeed provide the 'key' to «Ἡ Γένεσις», it must been as the source of the initial idea which developed into the persona of Αὐτός. This persona, as we shall see, has many Christ-like attributes and functions, though he stands essentially in opposition to the ethos of Christianity. In general terms Elytis says of his ancestor, 'his example— and his blood— opened for me once more, but outside of Christianity, the way of holiness'.[79] The role of guide implied here is taken in the poem not by the ancestral saint, Ἐκεῖνος, but by Αὐτός who first appears in Paragraph 1 of «Ἡ Γένεσις» (13:18-21):

Ἦταν ὁ ἥλιος μὲ τὸν ἄξονά του μέσα μου

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[78] Kechagioglou 1995: 53.

[79] Kechagioglou 1995: 53.

πολυάχτιδος ὅλος ποὺ καλοῦσε Καὶ
αὐτὸς ἀλήθεια ποὺ ἤμουνα Ὁ πολλοὺς αἰῶνες πρίν
Ὁ ἀκόμη χλωρὸς μὲς στὴ φωτιά Ὁ ἄκοπος ἀπ' τὸν οὐρανό

Commentators find in these lines many allusions to Christ, but all previous discussions have been to some extent beside the point, since they have not recognized that here Elytis is reworking and condensing a passage from Sikelianos' «Τὸ Κατορθωμένο Σῶμα» (the final section of '*Η Συνείδηση τῆς Προσωπικῆς Δημιουργίας*):

Ὦ μέσα μου ἥλιε!
Αἰώνιε πύρινε τροχέ,
ἀξόνι ἀκοίμητο τοῦ πάθους,
ζωντανὸ μυστήριο τῆς ταξιαρχίας,
αἷμα τοῦ αἵματός μου,
ὦ προαιώνια, μυστικὰ θαμμένη Ἑνότητα βαθιά μου,
δὲ θὰ σὲ σαρκώσω τέλος;
. . . . . .
Ὦ πλέρια εἰκόνα τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ μου,
δὲ θὲ νὰ Σὲ φτάσω;[80]

In Sikelianos' 'sun within me, immovable axis of passion' we have the origin of Elytis' 'sun with its axis within me'; and in the 'perfect image of myself' which is the 'Unity buried from of old (προαιώνια) within me' the origin of Elytis' 'he who I truly am, he of many centuries [*or* ages] ago'.

The idea of Αὐτός appears, then, to have arisen from the conjunction of the family saint with Sikelianos' idea of a self which is distinct from the ego and yet to be attained (νὰ Σὲ φτάσω). The phrase αἷμα τοῦ αἵματός μου, closely followed in Sikelianos by the verb σαρκώνω (here active and transitive meaning, to 'give flesh to' an idea as a sculptor does) is probably reflected in Elytis' reference (quoted above) to

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[80] Sikelianos 1965-69: III, 245-6 (lines 2-8, 25-6).

his martyred ancestor πού τὸ αἷμα του ἔδωσε νὰ σαρκωθῶ.[81]

Despite the strong influence of Sikelianos, the four phrases by which Elytis characterizes Αὐτός do have an undeniably ecclesiastical flavour. But it seems to me that the liturgical text which is nearest to the surface here, at least as a stylistic model, is the Nicene Creed, with its succession of phrases defining the nature of Christ:

> τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων· φῶς ἐκ φωτός, Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πάτρι, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο.

Here the phrase, πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων, contains a modifier, πάντων, which has its (significantly different) equivalent in Elytis' ὁ *πολλοὺς* αἰῶνες πρίν.[82] The Creed is trying to define the relationship between two beings who are distinct, as Father and Son, and yet united in their divinity, the Son being 'of one substance with the Father'. This is comparable to Elytis' concept of αὐτὸς ἀλήθεια πού ἤμουνα— note the double use of ἀληθινός in the Creed— which defines a relationship between the narrator and one who is not only his elder (by 'many centuries') but is also connected in Elytis' imagination with an ancestor, a relationship, in other words, of a father-son type. 'Many centuries ago' is an exaggeration, but not an extravagant exaggeration, when applied to an eighteenth-century

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[81] The influence on AE of Sikelianos' fifth *Συνείδηση* , first published in 1946, is not limited to these passages. One could even argue that AE is, in part, an attempt to flesh out the rather thin texture of the fifth *Συνείδηση*, which is over-reliant on abstractions and symbols and rather lacking, compared to Sikelianos' earlier work, in references to sensory experience. That Elytis' conceptual analysis of «Τὰ Πάθη» divides it into three Συνειδήσεις (Kechagioglou 1995: 39-41) is suggestive here.

[82] As a source for this phrase, Lignadis prefers (1989: 51) the refrain from Romanos' Kontakion No.1, παιδίον νέον, ὁ πρὸ αἰώνων θεός, to ὁ Παλαιὸς τῶν ἡμερῶν of Daniel 7.9 and 7.13, while Galani (1988: 85-9) cites several related phrases from Byzantine hymns.

saint, and this may be the primary significance of Elytis' liturgical-sounding phrase, if, as I have suggested, the ancestral saint has been transformed into 'him that I truly was'.

While the Creed tells us that Jesus 'came down from heaven' and, after his death and Resurrection, 'ascended into heaven', it does not make explicit the belief that he never ceased to be God and remained enthroned in heaven even during the period of his Incarnation. This paradox finds frequent expression in liturgical texts,[83] and is echoed in Elytis' ὁ ἄκοπος ἀπ' τὸν οὐρανό.

In the phrase, Ὁ ἀκόμη χλωρὸς μὲς στὴ φωτιά, Lignadis sees an allusion to the Burning Bush,[84] but an allusion to the Burning Fiery Furnace is equally plausible. Nebuchadnezzar had cast 'three men bound into the fire', but when he looked he saw that there were four.[85] Traditional exegesis has regarded the fourth man, 'like the Son of God' (*AV*), as a type of Christ.

The sequence of four phrases describing Αὐτός is repeated in Paragraphs 2, 6 and 7 of «Ἡ Γένεσις», but in Paragraph 2 (14:18-19) the final phrase is replaced by ὁ Ἀχειροποίητος, which is related to the γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα of the Creed. Lignadis makes the obvious connection with the icons of supposed miraculous origin venerated by the Orthodox, but ἀχειροποίητος is a NT word and its alleged use by Christ is more pertinent here. In his trial before the Sanhedrin Jesus is accused of having said, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands (ἀχειροποίητος)'. This is described as false witness by Mark (and by Matthew, whose wording is

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[83] See Galani 1988: 87-9.

[84] Lignadis 1989: 51; Exodus 3.1-3.

[85] Daniel 3.24-5. No phrase comparable to Elytis' μὲς στὴ φωτιά is found in the account of the Burning Bush, whereas here the four men of Daniel are ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ πυρός. There is no doubt that Elytis referred to Daniel in composing AE (see pp.290-92, 297-9).

different), but John gives a similar assertion (but lacking the χειροποίητος/ἀχειροποίητος dichotomy) as the true words of Jesus, adding that 'he spoke of the temple of his body'.[86] All the versions of this saying have been generally understood in John's terms as references to the Resurrection.

Thus all the phrases used to characterize Αὐτός associate this persona with Christ. But this is not to say that Elytis intends his readers to see 'him that I really was' as simply identified with Christ (or as representing the presence of Christ in the poem), for in many ways the words and actions of Αὐτός are most un-Christ-like. Consider his first utterance (13: 26-32):

" Ἐντολή σου, εἶπε, αὐτὸς ὁ κόσμος
καὶ γραμμένος μὲς στὰ σπλάχνα σου εἶναι
Διάβασε καὶ προσπάθησε
καὶ πολέμησε,, εἶπε
" Ὁ καθεὶς καὶ τὰ ὅπλα του,, εἶπε
Καὶ τὰ χέρια του ἄπλωσε ὅπως κάνει
νέος δόκιμος Θεὸς γιὰ νὰ πλάσει μαζὶ ἀλγηδόνα κι εὐφροσύνη.

Ἐντολή is a word used throughout the OT and NT for the moral demands which God makes on men. The form of the statement 'your commandment [is] this world' and its logical type— an assertion that a commandment is something which manifestly is not a commandment— alludes to, and contests, Jesus' words about the commandment which the Father had given him:

ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιός ἐστιν.[87]

The rejection of eternity as something distinct from 'this world' is a

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[86] Mark 14.58; Matthew 26.60-61; John 2.19.

[87] John 12.50.

recurrent theme in AE, and it is a rejection of another aspect of the Christian world view. 'This world' is a term used many times in the NT in a pejorative sense to indicate that which is inferior to and inimical to the Kingdom of Heaven. This 'commandment' of the poet's true self, with its positive commendation of 'this world' and its injunction to 'fight' seems to be directed against the whole tenor of NT teaching, and against one saying of Jesus in particular, his response to Pilate's question, 'Are you the King of the Jews?':

> ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου· εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἦν ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμή, οἱ ὑπηρέται ἂν οἱ ἐμοὶ ἠγωνίζοντο.[88]

Jesus says,'*If* my kingship *were* of this world, my servants *would* fight [. . .] but my kingship is not from the world', while Αὐτός commands the infant narrator to 'fight' (πολέμησε) precisely because 'this world' is his domain;[89] and it is 'this world' which «Ἡ Γένεσις» celebrates above all else, witness the exclamatory refrain with which all but the first and last paragraphs end (e.g. 15:32-3):

> ΑΥΤΟΣ
> ὁ κόσμος ὁ μικρός, ὁ μέγας!

In Elytis' loose analogy with the creation story, Αὐτός, one might say, plays the role of God, the narrator that of Adam. Αὐτός is creating the world *for* the narrator (the the narrator's experiential world), as God, in the second creation narrative in Genesis, creates plants, animals and woman for Adam.[90] In at least one instance in «Ἡ Γένεσις», however, the

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[88] John 18.33-6. The same text is also contested by Palamas (see pp.73-4).

[89] See the opening of Paragraph 4: "Καὶ τὸν κόσμο αὐτὸν ἀνάγκη νὰ τὸν βλέπει καὶ νὰ τὸν λαβαίνεις.. / εἶπε (17:1-2).

[90] Genesis 2.9, 15-16, 18-22.

role of God is distributed between Αὐτός and Ἐγώ . The episode of the creation of the sea has already been referred to in §4.2, but of particular interest here are the elements omitted when parts of the relevant lines (16:9-11) were quoted before:

> Τότε εἶπε καὶ γεννήθηκεν ἡ θάλασσα
> Καὶ εἶδα καὶ θαύμασα
> Καὶ στὴ μέση της ἔσπειρε κόσμους μικροὺς κατ' εἰκόνα καὶ
> ὁμοίωσή μου.

Αὐτός speaks the creative word and the sea is born, but it is the narrator who 'saw and marvelled', appropriating God's response to the creation of the 'Seas':

> καὶ εἶδεν ὁ Θεός, ὅτι καλόν.[91]

Furthermore, the narrator says that the 'little worlds' (islands) which Αὐτός 'sowed' were 'in *my* image and likeness'.[92] Here again the narrator appropriates to himself words which in Genesis refer to God (though in the context of the creation of man rather than of land and sea):

> καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Θεός· ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν.[93]

These appropriations imply, at the very least, a certain lack of inhibitions in the use of the Bible. They make it clear that Elytis is not treating Genesis as a sacred text, but as a literary source from which to extract phrases to serve his own ends; and they are the first indications—

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[91] Genesis 1.8.

[92] *Pace* Galani (1988: 97), the distinction between Αὐτός and Ἐγώ is only dissolved (in Paragraph 7) as the result of a developmental process, and the dynamic of that process is the dynamic of «Ἡ Γένεσις».

[93] Genesis 1.26.

preceding the narrator's application of the incarnational verb to himself[94]— of the bold and wide-ranging appropriation by the narrator of divine attributes or words and functions of Christ, particularly in «Τὰ Πάθη».

The sharing of the divine role in creation between Αὐτός and Ἐγώ is consistent with the relation between them: Αὐτός is that which Ἐγώ is in the process of becoming; and in the last Paragraph (7) of «Ἡ Γένεσις» their union is effected (see below). Paragraph 7 also contains further instances of the appropriation of divine attributes by the narrator, though they are less obvious than his speaking of creation 'in my image and likeness'. Only a few lines after the reference to the ancestor 'who gave his blood that I might be made flesh', we read of the 'Voids' which Αὐτός, who creates 'pain and gladness together', 'prepared in the earth and in the body of man' (22:29-32):

> τὸ κενὸ τοῦ Θανάτου γιὰ τὸ Βρέφος τὸ Ἐρχόμενο
> τὸ κενὸ τοῦ Φονικοῦ γιὰ τὴ Δικαία Κρίση
> τὸ κενὸ τῆς Θυσίας γιὰ τὴν Ἴση Ἀνταπόδοση
> τὸ κενὸ τῆς Ψυχῆς γιὰ τὴν Εὐθύνη τοῦ Ἄλλου

Among the voids, that of the 'Soul' is the odd one out, for 'Murder' and 'Sacrifice' both denote 'Death', representing alternative perspectives on a certain kind of death, such as the Crucifixion of Christ or the martyrdom of Elytis' ancestor, and both are frequently used of the death of Christ in liturgical texts. 'Just Judgement' is also specifically associated with Christ, as in the prayer from Vespers for Κυριακὴ τῆς Ἀπόκρεω (the third Sunday of Carnival):

> Ὅταν μέλλῃς ἔρχεσθαι, κρίσιν δικαίαν ποιῆσαι, κριτὰ δικαιότατε, ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης σου καθεζόμενος.

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[94] See pp.303-4.

The implication of Christ in the phrase τὸ Βρέφος τὸ 'Ερχόμενο is hard to resist. Βρέφος is used by Luke (and frequently in liturgical texts) of the infant Christ;[95] and τὸ 'Ερχόμενο suggests ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου, the phrase from Psalm 117(118).26 with which the crowds greeted Jesus when he entered Jerusalem. When Elytis uses the word ἐρχόμενος again, in «Τὰ Πάθη», the allusion to this Gospel incident is in no doubt.[96] In the reference to the ancestral saint as 'Εκεῖνον ποὺ τὸ αἷμα του ἔδωσε νὰ σαρκωθῶ, the basic idea is of death being productive of new life; and it is a short step to read the death of 'Εκεῖνος and its relation to the birth of the narrator as a specific example of what is generalized some lines later in τὸ κενὸ τοῦ Θανάτου γιὰ τὸ Βρέφος τὸ 'Ερχόμενο, and thus to see τὸ Βρέφος τὸ 'Ερχόμενο (like ὁ ἐρχόμενος in «Τὰ Πάθη») as referring both to Christ and to the narrator himself. Furthermore, in «Τὰ Πάθη» again, 'Judgement' and 'Recompense' are revealed as the prerogatives of the narrator.[97]

Paragraph 7 of «'Η Γένεσις» marks the end of childhood, the end of the narrator's innocence, as Αὐτός presents to him the 'Voids' and the necessity of confrontation with 'the Others' (23:18-32). The climax comes with the union of Αὐτός and 'Εγώ (23:34-7) when 'he that I truly was'

Πέρασε μέσα μου Ἔγινε
αὐτὸς ποὺ εἶμαι

This may be connected with the idea of Christ entering the soul of the believer, especially in the receiving of Communion, as expressed in the pre-Communion prayers already referred to in connection with

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[95] Luke 2.12, 16.

[96] See pp.348, 351.

[97] See pp.318-19, 335-8, 340-42. Note that «'Η Γένεσις» was composed as the 'Introduction' to «Τὰ Πάθη» after the latter had been drafted (see p.303).

Sikelianos.[98]

«Ἡ Γένεσις» ends with an enigmatic gesture of self-affirmation (24:6-8):

Πῆρε ὄψη ὁ Ἥλιος Ὁ Ἀρχάγγελος ὁ ἀεὶ δεξιά μου

ΑΥΤΟΣ ἐγὼ λοιπὸν
καὶ ὁ κόσμος ὁ μικρός, ὁ μέγας!

On the first page of «Ἡ Γένεσις» the narrator spoke of the sun with its axis within me' which was associated (but not necessarily identified) with '[him] that I truly was'. 'The Sun assumed a face' inevitably points to Apollo, but there is also a strong suggestion that the face the Sun assumed was that of Αὐτός, or (more likely) of Ἐγώ (though they are in any case now one). This is perhaps the narrator's 'other face', of which Αὐτός said (22:20-21), ἀνάγκη ν' ἀνέβει στὸ φῶς. The implication of Apollo the sun-god, following an allusion to the Parthenon in the previous line, adds a pagan dimension to the metaphorical apotheosis of the narrator which has otherwise been articulated through the appropriation of Christian concepts.

Whatever the 'Archangel' represents (the continuing presence of Αὐτός in so far as he remains conceptually distinct from the narrator? *Angelos* Sikelianos?), he is allocated the subordinate position, 'on my right hand'. In terms of the Bible, which the reference to the 'Archangel' invites us to consider, 'on my/your/his right hand' expresses above all the relation of Christ to God the Father. The source text is Psalm 109(110).1:

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος τῷ Κυρίῳ μου· κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου.

In the Gospels Christ applies this text to himself and the Epistles repeatedly

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[98] See p.258. In this context, note this in particular from the third pre-Communion prayer: κατάδεξαι εἰσελθεῖν καὶ εἰς τὸν οἶκον τῆς ταπεινῆς μου ψυχῆς.

allude to it.[99]

The basic meaning of the last three lines of «Ἡ Γένεσις» is surely that, Αὐτός having 'passed within me' and 'become he who I am', the narrator, whose destiny is at the very least to 'lead' (23:32), now assumes centre stage, becomes the Sun of his own world, acknowledging no superior being. The final (variant) refrain, whose first line has been translated as 'THIS I then' and 'THIS then am I',[100] might be better understood as 'HE[,] I then / and the small world, the great', restating the union of Αὐτὸς and 'Εγώ, and answering to the statement in the opening page, 'Εκεῖ μόνος ἀντίκρισα / τὸν κόσμο (13:8-9).

In depicting 'Εκεῖνος and Αὐτός and their relation to 'Εγώ, Elytis has drawn both conceptually and verbally on the very core of Christian theology. Redemption through the death of Christ is reflected in the connection between 'Εκεῖνος and 'Εγώ. The phrases characterizing Αὐτός reflect formulations of the dual divine and human natures of Christ. The unity of Father and Son and the indwelling of Christ in the believer are reflected in the relation of Αὐτός to 'Εγώ. The birth of 'Εγώ is linked to the Incarnation, and both Αὐτός and 'Εγώ are associated with the language of divine creation. These are not primarily allusions *to* God or Christ, but appropriations in the strongest sense of that word: the theft of language. And with the language the roles and functions of Christ are stolen too, but transposed into a different context.

The creation in «Ἡ Γένεσις» is not the creation of the universe, but of 'this world', the world of immediate sensory awareness: a Greek world, the seas and islands of Elytis' own experience. It is not, however (beyond the narrator's childhood and adolescence), a purely subjective world. The

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[99] See especially Matthew 22.44, 26.24; Ephesians 1.20; Colossians 3.1; Hebrews 1.3, 13, 8.1, 10.12, 12.2; I Peter 3.22.

[100] Keeley & Savidis 1980: 28; Carson & Sarris 1997: 133.

narrator has to confront 'the Others', both allies and enemies; his destiny is to 'lead', and in his self-presentation as 'the anchor let down among men' (23:2) he lays claim to a unique position with overtones of a Christ-like redemptive function.[101] The idea of the moral and spiritual authority of the poet-narrator is developed in the course of «Τὰ Πάθη».

Whereas much of the language which the narrator appropriates points, in the context of Christian discourse, to Christ, Elytis' narrator, after the union with his true self (Αὐτός), increasingly directs attention to himself. Despite all the allusions to Christ and the Creator-God of Genesis, there is no place in the world of AE for the divine as conceived of by Christianity. Ultimately, as I have indicated in §4.2 in relation to «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν», it is the tangible world itself which takes the place of the divine as object of worship. And the functions of God in relation to men, and particularly Christ's roles as Redeemer and Judge, are assumed at different points in «Τὰ Πάθη» by the Greek people, Lefteris, and above all by the narrator himself. These displacements are effected, as in «Ἡ Γένεσις», through appropriations of Biblical and liturgical language; and there is a strong implication that the God to whom such language belongs in its original context does not exist, or, to the extent that he does exist in the minds of men, is to be resisted. The most obvious examples of this resistance on the narrator's part are discussed in the next section.

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101 The anchor as a symbol for Christ derives from Hebrews 6.18-19. Stanza 31 of Kalvos' «Εἰς Θάνατον» (Kalvos 1970: 48) may be the intermediate source (Lignadis 1989: 89). Elytis' awareness of the Christian significance of the anchor is indicated by his use of the title of the Virgin, Ἀγκυροφόρος, among the liturgical borrowings in the Χαιρετισμοί of «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» (77:4).

4.5 Νά, στὸ ἀνταποδίδω:
The narrator's 'revolt against God'

The poems of Palamas and Sikelianos discussed in previous chapters frequently speak directly of God, Christ and the Panagia, and there are many in which Christ and the Panagia are the ostensible subjects. In AE there is nothing comparable. Elytis frequently alludes to Gospel incidents and the sayings of Christ, but these allusions do not make Christ present as subject, since the narrative motifs and fragments of utterances are appropriated to the personae of the poem, and the subject matter is contemporary. Where there are passages (principally Ode iv and Psalms XV and XVI of «Τὰ Πάθη») where the Judaeo-Christian God is made present as addressee, the tone of these is, I shall argue, pervasively ironic.

It might be thought that AE also contains two passages addressed to the Panagia, namely, Ode x in «Τὰ Πάθη» and the Χαιρετισμοί in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν». According to Elytis' notes, however, the Χαιρετισμοί are addressed 'to the little girl who will save the world and is the personification of the poetic ideal'. This piece of information (illuminating the wilder flights of Elytis' quasi-religious imagination) is wholly external to the text, for this παιδούλα has no discernible presence in the poem. It does, nevertheless, confirm what the reader might expect from Elytis' use of source material related to Christ, that these Χαιρετισμοί appropriate to some other persona elements of liturgical language which in their original context belong to the Panagia.

Who, though, is the 'Distant Mother' to whom the whole of Ode x is addressed through its refrain, Μακρινὴ Μητέρα Ρόδο μου 'Αμάραντο? 'A synthesis', according to Lignadis, 'of Panagia, Greece and Mother'.[102] Ρόδο τὸ 'Αμάραντο is the familiar image from the Akathistos Canon

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[102] Lignadis 1989: 211.

which Elytis, like Palamas and Sikelianos before him,[103] applies to the Mother rather than, as in the Canon, to the Son. I suspect, though, that for Elytis the Mother is not primarily, or even significantly, the Panagia. For Elytis alludes, perhaps, first and foremost to Solomos' personification of Greece and Liberty, the Μεγάλη Μητέρα of «Οἱ Ἐλεύθεροι Πολιορκημένοι».[104] This figure, whom Solomos imagined among the people of Missolonghi, is distant for Elytis now that the idea of Greece and the ideal of Liberty have been compromised by the Civil War (the subject of the Fifth Reading which precedes Ode x).

Solomos' Μεγάλη Μητέρα awaits 'the end of the struggle', confident in the courage of 'her children' because,

> εἰς τὰ μάτια της εἶναι φανερὰ τὰ πλέον ἀπόκρυφα τῆς ψυχῆς τους.

Elytis' Μακρινὴ Μητέρα once had a similar relation to the narrator (61:11-14):

Τὸν Ἰούλιο κάποτε ❀ μισανοίξανε
Τὰ μεγάλα μάτια της ❀ μὲς στὰ σπλάχνα μου
Τὴν παρθένα ζωὴ μιὰ ❀ στιγμὴ
❀ νὰ φωτίσουν.

Solomos describes the 'Great Mother' as προσωποιημένη ἡ Πατρίδα, but it is Elytis' narrator who, in Ode x, approximates this role (61:21):

Τῆς πατρίδας μου πάλι ❀ ὁμοιώθηκα

Ode x is not primarily, if at all, a prayer to the Panagia; and the liturgical

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103 See pp.90-92, 179.

104 Solomos 1961: 229-30.

title is appropriated to a persona who, at most, incorporates aspects of the Panagia.[105]

There are no comparable ambiguities in the passages addressed to God. I shall consider first Psalms XV and XVI in the Third Unit of «Τὰ Πάθη» and then, in the light of these, look back to Ode iv in the First Unit.

Psalm XV begins (62:1),

Θε μοι σὺ μὲ θέλησες καὶ νά, στὸ ἀνταποδίδω.

The verb ἀνταποδίδωμι and the cognate noun ἀνταπόδοσις imply an equivalence between repayment and original payment, and in moral and legal terms can refer either to reward or punishment; both uses are found in the Bible. While the double use of the verb in the Psalmist's question is a little odd, it is clearly being used in an entirely positive sense:

> τί ἀνταποδώσω τῷ Κυρίῳ περὶ πάντων, ὧν ἀνταπέδωκέ μοι;[106]

Elsewhere, though, it refers to retribution or vengeance, as when Paul says that 'it is written'

> ἐμοὶ ἐκδίκησις, ἐγὼ ἀνταποδώσω, λέγει Κύριος.[107]

Lignadis thinks that Elytis uses the verb in its positive sense. He speaks in terms of the δῶρο of God and the ἀντίδωρο of the poet's own creativity, and of cooperation with God: ὁ Θεὸς διατάσσει καὶ ὁ ποιητὴς [. . .] πραγματοποιεῖ. He also says Psalm XV is composed 'in

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105 Even Elytis' adaptation of the liturgical ῥόδον τὸ ἀμάραντον may have been prompted by an isolated line of Solomos: Τριαντάφυλλά 'ναι θεικὰ στὴν κόλαση πεσμένα. This is an image, as Solomos' prose explains, for 'all the treasures of mercy' if they were to be poured μὲς στὰ σπλάχνα of the enemy (Solomos 1961: 230).

106 Psalm 115.3(116.12).

107 Romans 12.19, alluding to Deuteronomy 32.35.

the Biblical manner of a loving complaint to God'.[108] However, the fact that there is such a large element of what might be called 'complaint' in the Psalm makes it difficult to interpret καὶ νά, στὸ ἀνταποδίδω as being in the spirit of the Psalmist's question, 'What shall I give back to the Lord for all that he has given me?' (my translation). The tone in Elytis is altogether more confident, even defiant. The narrator is in no doubt about his ability to make return to God, or to pay God back. As between man and God, ἀνταπόδοσις is, in the Bible, always the prerogative of God; and that is the Psalmist's point, that man cannot possibly repay God 'for all his bounty' (*RSV*).

Elytis himself describes Psalm XV as 'the revolt (ἀνταρσία) against God', and this is sufficient rebuttal of Lignadis' interpretation, at least as far as Elytis' intentions (as he viewed them in retrospect) are concerned.[108a] The text by itself, though, is ambiguous and difficult to interpret with confidence. One reason for this may be that two different conceptions of God are at work in it. The God against whom the narrator revolts is the Judaeo-Christian God, author of promises of justice which do not appear to mitigate the injustices of the world, and of a moral code which denies the body and denigrates sensuality. (Justice is the main theme of Psalm XV, sensuality of Psalm XVI.) At the end of Psalm XV a different conception emerges, of a God who is immanent in, and even, perhaps, not distinguishable from, the phenomenal world (62:24-9):

Τὰ στοιχεῖα πού εἶσαι,
ἡμέρες καὶ νύχτες,
ἥλιοι κι ἀστέρες, θύελλες καὶ γαλήνη,
ἀνατρέπω στὴν τάξη κι ἐναντίον τὰ βάζω
τοῦ δικοῦ μου θανάτου.

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[108] Lignadis 1989: 215. He may have been influenced by Sikelianos' use of ἀντίδωρο (see p.253 above), but inappropriately, since Sikelianos' relationship with his gods *is* always cooperative.

πού σὺ τὸν θέλησες![109]

The 'elements' which constitute this God are in a disordered or wrongly ordered state, and it is the poet's, that is, the narrator's, task to 'subvert them into order'. This provides a clue to the interpretation of the first line of the Psalm (Θεέ μου σὺ μὲ θέλησες καὶ νά, στὸ ἀνταποδίδω), which is repeated immediately before the lines quoted above. 'I pay you back' implies that the narrator's present action matches God's past action, characterized as 'you willed me'. The narrator, in other words, now wills God— recreates God, that is, according to his own vision, reorganizing the elements which are God. In effect, he remakes God in his own image, as becomes clear in Ode xi. The repetition of σὺ μὲ θέλησες (62:23) and its variants, σὺ τὴ/τὸ/τὸν θέλησες (62:9,13,17,29) for the events which frustrated the narrator's endeavours, can be seen as an ironic parody of that Christian resignation which tends to see everything that happens as the will of God.[110]

In Elytis' phrase, ἀνατρέπω στὴν τάξη καὶ ἐναντίον etc., Galani sees an allusion to Romanos' Kontakion No. 44, 'On Joseph II' (*oikos* 4):[111]

Τῶν πραγμάτων τὴν τάξιν ἡ παράνομος πρᾶξις
ἀπέστρεψε εἰς τὸ ἐναντίον.

If Galani is right— and I think she is— then Elytis' use of similar terms is

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[109] The three pairs of 'elements' are strongly suggestive of similar or identical pairs in the 'Song of the Three Holy Children', which significantly influenced the conception of «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» (see pp.290-92).

[110] The idea here is similar to that in Solomos' «Ὁ Λάμπρος» when Lambros, in the anguish of his guilt, describes God as Κάποιος ποὺ ὅ,τι θέλει κάνει, and says that it only remains for God to destroy himself for having created him. Lambros (Solomos 1961: 191-2).

[111] Galani 1988: 200.

highly subversive of Romanos' text.[112] Furthermore his interaction with this Kontakion extends to Psalm XVI, Ode xi and the Sixth Reading.

The subject of the Kontakion is Joseph's resistance to the attempts of his master's wife to seduce him. The order which is reversed is that of mistress and slave: Joseph, the slave, is δεσπότης πάσης ἡδονῆς τέλειος, while his mistress becomes ἀνδράποδον τῆς ἁμαρτίας (*oikos* 4). Elytis' narrator, subverting into order the elements that are God, could be identified with Potiphar's wife, his action with the 'lawless deed' that overturns the supposedly proper and God-ordained 'order of things'.

Joseph and the Egyptian woman are depicted by Romanos as personifications of virtue and sin. If we would learn the 'glory' of 'virtue' we should look to Joseph (*oikos* 2). In *oikos* 1 Romanos speaks of 'virtue' and 'sin' in general terms:

ἐνδυσώμεθα τὴν ἀρετὴν πανοπλίαν οὖσαν τῶν ψυχῶν
ἄτρωτον
ἵνα καὶ πολεμήσωμεν ὡς ἔμφρονες τὴν ἁμαρτίαν·
τίνα δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν νοῶμεν;

For Elytis' response to this, and particularly to the question 'What do we think virtue is?', we must turn to the opening of the Sixth Reading (65:1-2):

Χρονοις πολλοις μετὰ τὴν Ἁμαρτία ποὺ τὴν εἶπανε Ἀρετὴ
μέσα στὶς ἐκκλησίες καὶ τὴν εὐλόγησαν.

This indicates a radical inversion of at least some of the values of Christianity, and is probably aimed at the particular notion of virtue celebrated in the Kontakion, and the equation of sexuality with sin. This

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112 At the surface level, Elytis condenses and reverses τὴν τάξιν ἐπέστρεψε εἰς τὸ ἐναντίον as ἀνατρέπω στὴν τάξη and then redeploys ἐναντίον, while Romanos' πράγματα are amplified as the various στοιχεῖα of the natural world.

view is supported by the role of the 'prostitute' who, in the second of the Sixth Reading's four sections, 'will become the prosecutor of the wise and the great' (65:25-6), and the vision at the end of the Reading, of the regenerative coupling of the 'last of men' with a woman 'like a sunray' in which 'the dreams will take their revenge' (66:35—67:5).[112a]

Romanos presents the attempted seduction of Joseph as a struggle between good and evil, virtue and sin, purity and lust, and expresses a horror at the very idea of sexuality (that the proposed liaison is adulterous is little more than an exacerbating circumstance). Ἡδονή and ἁμαρτία are effectively synonymous. One can speculate that Elytis read this Kontakion with profound distaste and was inspired to write the opening of Psalm XVI as a further act of defiance of the God associated with such morality (63:7 makes clear that Psalm XVI, like the previous one, is addressed to God).[113]

The earlier Ode iv should, I suggest, be read in the light of the 'revolt against God' evident in Psalms XV and XVI. In his commentary on Ode iv, Lignadis cites a bewildering variety of sources.[114] Of these, the two which seem to me vital to the understanding of the Ode are 'The Bridge of Arta' and the Good Friday Encomia.

Galani cites part of one of the Encomia (Third Stasis No. 16), Θεέ μου, πλαστουργέ μου, as the source of Elytis' hemistich (repeated six times), Θέ μου Πρωτομάστορα, and she notes, without exploring its

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[112a] See pp. 342-4

[113] Ἐνωρὶς ἐξύπνησα τὶς ἡδονὲς (63:1), referring to the deliberate awakening of sensuality in youth, is written in defiance of the warning in the first line of the first Prooimion to the Kontakion: Ἀκολασία τὸν νέον ἐξαπατᾷ πρὸς ἡδύτητα. In a similar warning in *oikos* 14 Romanos, like Elytis, uses ἡδονή in the plural: ὅταν γὰρ τὶς λογισμὸν οὐκ ἔχει [. . .] εἰς ἀπρεπεῖς ἡδονὰς καταφέρεται. Compare the hints of early eroticism in Sikelianos' *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* (see p.187) and his eroticization of the twelve-year-old Christ (see p.170).

[114] Lignadis 1989: 135-8.

significance, the connection between the Ode and 'The Bridge of Arta'.[115] Despite the obvious positive connotations of Πρωτομάστορα, especially in the context of Freemasonry, in which Elytis was involved, the connection with 'The Bridge of Arta' gives it a sinister ambiguity. In this folksong the Master Builder's wife is sacrificed, with her husband's consent and participation, so that the bridge will stand. She is enclosed in the masonry of the footings of the bridge. In addressing God as Πρωτομάστορας, Elytis' narrator implicitly identifies himself with the Master Builder's wife: he speaks, that is, as a victim, and for all the victims, of 'God the Master Builder'. The entire Ode is, in my view, deeply ironical and anti-Christian.

It consists of three four-line stanzas, in a thirteen-syllable folksong metre with caesura after the seventh syllable, and a partly variable two-line refrain. The first hemistich in each line of the refrain is always Θέ μου Πρωτομάστορα. If we consider the second hemistichs in four of such lines (39:5-6, 17-18) the connection with 'The Bridge of Arta' becomes obvious:

[. . .] μ' ἔχτισες μέσα στὰ βουνὰ
[. . .] μ' ἔκλεισες μὲς στὴ θάλασσα!
. . . . . .
[. . .] μ' ἔζωσες τὶς ἀκρογιαλιές
[. . .] στὰ βουνὰ μὲ θεμέλιωσες!

Two of the verbs used here refer to enclosure (ἔκλεισες, ἔζωσες), and the fate of the Master Builder's wife gives a sinister ambiguity to the other two (ἔχτισες, θεμέλιωσες).[116] Elytis has transposed the two elements in which the Master Builder's wife was enclosed— the water of the river and the

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115 Galani 1988: 142-3. For the folksong «Τοῦ Γιοφυριοῦ τῆς Ἄρτας» see Politis 1969: 131-3.

116 The verb θεμελιώνω occurs in line 2 of 'The Bridge of Arta'. For the Biblical source of στὰ βουνὰ μὲ θεμέλιωσες see p.327 n.126.

masonry of the bridge— onto a larger scale as 'sea' and 'mountains'.[117] Significantly, in Elytis' text mountains are the setting of the immediately preceding Second Reading— the mountains of Albania in 1940-41.[118] The 'costly spring' (line 1) seems to be the spring of 1941, when the Germans, invading Greece from Yugoslavia, cut off the Greek troops in Albania, precipitating the collapse of the Albanian Front.

The concern with the return of the sun in stanza 1 is clearly within the sphere of the Good Friday Encomia, where the setting of Christ the Sun in the tomb and the darkening of the sun itself are recurrent motifs:

> Ἔδυς ὑπὸ γῆν ὁ τὸν ἄνθρωπον χειρί σου πλάσας.
> . . . . . .
> Ἔδυς, φωτουργέ, καὶ συνέδυ σοι τὸ φῶς ἡλίου.[119]

The return of the sun and the coming of spring are both analogues of the Resurrection. In Ode iv the return of the sun 'requires much work', and much sacrifice, not, however, the saving work of Christ, his sacrificial death on the Cross, but 'thousands of dead [. . .] at the Wheels' and the blood of the living. Given that Ode iv follows the Second Reading, this inevitably appears to refer (though not exclusively) to the dead and wounded in war. The idea seems to be that 'God the Master Builder' presides over the machinery of death, like Moloch.[120]

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[117] In the folksong the second version of the woman's curse connects the bridge with the mountains (line 44): Ἂν τρέμουν τ' ἄγρια βουνά, νὰ τρέμῃ τὸ γιοφύρι.

[118] Soldiers from Arta ('Αρτινοί) are mentioned in the First Reading (they have suffered heavy losses at the front and are being replaced by the narrator's regiment) (30:3-6); and in the Second Reading Arta itself is mentioned, along with Preveza, as a place where the lives of the front-line soldiers are acted out in the theatres (37:12-14). It is a curious, and probably not fortuitous, parallel that 'The Bridge of Arta' becomes a symbol of their fate.

[119] Second Stasis Nos. 9 and 30. See also Nos. 3, 7, 15, 25, 35, 36, 45 and 52, and First Stasis Nos. 11, 14, 19, 26, 30 and 31.

[120] Latent here is the rejection of the Cross which becomes explicit in Psalm XII (see pp.335-7).

Stanza 2 elaborates the theme of burial implicit in the refrains quoted above. Magi have taken the 'body of May' and 'buried it in a tomb of the sea / in a deep well', but the body (39:10)

Μύρισε τὸ σκοτά ❀ δι κι ὅλη ἡ Ἄβυσσο.

The synaestheic assertion, μύρισε τὸ σκοτάδι, suggests the illumination of the Abyss, and thus the effect of Christ's descent into Hades as described in the Good Friday Encomia:[121]

> Ὡς φωτὸς λυχνία νῦν ἡ σάρξ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὑπὸ γῆν [. . .] διώκει τὸν ἐν Ἅδῃ σκοτασμόν.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Ὢ χαρᾶς ἐκείνης [. . .] ἥσπερ τοὺς ἐν Ἅδῃ πεπλήρωκας, ἐν πυθμέσι φῶς ἀστράψας ζοφεροῖς.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Ἕδυς ὑπὸ γῆν ὁ φωσφόρος [. . .] ἐκδιώξας ἅπαν τὸ ἐν τῷ Ἅδῃ σκότος.[122]

The final phrase in the above, 'all the darkness in Hades', has, granted the equivalence of Hades and the Abyss, all the same semantic elements as Elytis' τὸ σκοτάδι κι ὅλη ἡ Ἄβυσσο.[123] The refrain to stanza 2 (39:11-12),

Θέ μου Πρωτομάστορα ❀ μέσα στὶς πασχαλιὲς καὶ Σὺ
Θέ μου Πρωτομάστορα ❀ μύρισες τὴν Ἀνάσταση!

seems to dissociate 'God the Master Builder' from the Resurrection,

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[121] Also an allusion to Solomos' «Οἱ Ἐλεύθεροι Πολιορκημένοι», where 'pure, sweet waters' Χύνονται μὲς στὴν ἄβυσσο τὴ μοσχοβολισμένη, / Καὶ παίρνουνε τὸ μόσχο της (Solomos 1961: 244).

[122] First Stasis Nos. 19 and 48, Second Stasis No. 15.

[123] The association of πηγάδι and Ἄβυσσος was probably suggested by the φρέαρ τῆς ἀβύσσου of the Apocalypse, from which 'rose smoke [. . .] and the sun and the air were darkened' (Revelation 9.1-2).

especially if the two second hemistichs are read as a single clause: 'among the lilacs even You smelled the Resurrection'. This is not surely, the Resurrection of Christ, but of the Master Builder's victims of stanza 1. This Resurrection is represented in stanza 3 (39:13-16) as 'the fearsome insect of memory within the earth', which 'as a spider bites bit the light', so that 'the shore and the whole sea shone'.

Misled by a mistaken source identification, Lignadis describes this stanza in terms of 'the victory of the light of justice' in a specifically Christian sense, and Galani says that in the image of the 'insect of memory' biting the light '*Mneme* is identified with the light-giving God'.[124] Neither seems to pay attention to the violence of Elytis' image. Even though Elytis is probably not alluding to the Easter Canon, the light which the 'insect' bites or seizes is in a sense the light of Christ. The echoes of the language in which the Encomia describe Christ's burial and descent into Hell indicate that it is Christ's death and Resurrection which is being appropriated and rewritten in this Ode.[125] The biting of the light may be seen, then, as a metaphor of appropriation, and the agent of that appropriation, the 'insect of memory', is, surely, the collective memory of the Greek people.

The 'memory of my people' is the subject of the immediately following Psalm V, which begins with a strong verbal link to Ode iv (40:1-5):

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[124] As source for the line ἔλαμψαν οἱ γιαλοὶ κι ὅλο τὸ πέλαγος both Galani (1988: 153-4) and Lignadis (1989: 138) cite νῦν πάντα πεπλήρωται φωτός, οὐρανός καὶ γῆ from the Canon for Orthros on Easter Sunday (Ode 3, Troparion 1). This is probably irrelevant, since Elytis is clearly imitating a line from a folksong: ἔβαψε ἡ ἄκρη τοῦ γιαλοῦ κ' ἡ μέση τοῦ πελάγου (Politis 1969: 126), which Lignadis misquotes under the influence of Elytis' line.

[125] Compare Sikelianos' «'Ανάσταση» (wr. 1942, pub. 1945) in which the body in Christ's tomb awaiting the Resurrection is 'Ελλάδα. Like Elytis' ode this poem begins with an allusion to the proverb 'one swallow does not bring the spring' (Sikelianos 1965-69: V, 160).

Τα θεμελια μου στὰ βουνὰ[126]
καὶ τὰ βουνὰ σηκώνουν οἱ λαοὶ στὸν ὦμο τους
καὶ πάνω τους ἡ μνήμη καίει
ἄκαυτη βάτος.
Μνήμη τοῦ λαοῦ μου σὲ λένε Πίνδο καὶ σὲ λένε Ἄθω.

Reading from Ode iv to Psalm V one gets 'My God the Master Builder, you founded me in the mountains [. . .] and the people lifted up the mountains on their shoulders'. The people here are thus outdoing or displacing God, as, in Ode iv, their sufferings displace those of Christ. The displacement is confirmed in Elytis' appropriation of the Burning Bush (ὁ βάτος καίεται πυρί, ὁ δὲ βάτος οὐ κατεκαίετο).[127] This Bush, out of which God spoke to Moses, is identified with 'memory' which is clearly the 'memory of my people'.[128]

Psalm V also contains a confirmation of the implication in Ode iv that the people are the agents of the Resurrection. Addressing Μνήμη τοῦ λαοῦ μου, the narrator says (40:16-17):

κι ἐσὺ στοῦ νεροῦ τῶν αἰώνων τὴν ἄκρη σύρεις
πασχαλιὰν ἀναστάσιμη!

Returning to Ode iv with this last metaphor in mind, as well as the image of the people carrying the mountains on which burns the Bush

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[126] This line adapts Psalm 86(87).1: Οἱ θεμέλιοι αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσι τοῖς ἁγίοις. 'His' refers to God (the Psalm continues, ἀγαπᾷ Κύριος τὰς πύλας Σιών), so we see here another displacement of God by the narrator.

[127] Exodus 3.1-4; and see Galani 1988: 157.

[128] Significantly for Elytis' choice of this Biblical image, what God says to Moses from the Burning Bush concerns the sufferings of his people: ἰδὼν εἶδον τὴν κάκωσιν τοῦ λαοῦ μου [. . .] οἶδα γὰρ τὴν ὀδύνην αὐτῶν (Exodus 3.7) Elytis' phrase ὁ λαός μου (used repeatedly in «Τὰ Πάθη») is common in the OT, characteristic of the utterances of God.

containing God, it becomes apparent that displacement is not the only way of interpreting the relations of the suffering people to Christ. A parallel and in no way contradictory interpretation is to see the figure of the resurrected Christ (ἡ 'Ανάσταση) as the creation of the Greek people, the symbol of the ultimate reward and justification of their suffering.

Despite the problems of interpretation that Ode iv offers, it is clear that the exegeses of Lignadis and Galani, in which the Ode is interpreted in conformity with the Christian myth of Christ's burial, descent into Hell and Resurrection, will not do.[129] Of course these are present in the Ode— it is unusually rich, even for AE, in Biblical and liturgical allusions—but the unmistakable allusions to 'The Bridge of Arta' give the refrains addressed to God an accusatory character and must influence the interpretation of the stanzas, not only ruling out the Christian interpretation, but requiring the interpretation of the Ode as radically anti-Christian, a gesture of defiance directed at the God who could require the sacrifice of his own Son— as the Master Builder of Arta sacrificed his own wife— for the fulfilment of his designs. Perhaps Ode iv should be seen as driving a wedge between God the Father, the omnipotent but heartless Πρωτομάστορας, and God the Son, fellow victim to all who suffer under the oppression of superior force. What is clear, though, is that Ode iv, as much as Psalm XV, articulates the 'revolt against God'.

This 'revolt against God' involves the rejection of the omnipotent Jehovah of the OT, many of whose characteristics are carried over into the Christian concepts of God the Father and of Christ as stern arbiter at the Last Judgement. While the omnipotent God who requires sacrifice is rejected, Christ is appropriated: in his sufferings to the partisan, Lefteris,

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[129] Lignadis 1989: 135-8, and in particular his summary of the contents of the Ode (*ibid.* 138); Galani 1988: 139-55.

in the Fourth Reading,[130] and to the Greek people in Ode iv, but more widely to the narrator who appropriates not only the sufferings but also, as we shall see, the roles of prophet and redeemer, and even the triumph and glory of Christ.

[130] Elytis treats the execution of Lefteris by the Germans as an analogy of the Passion, with Lefteris and the informer in the roles of Jesus and Judas, the commanding officer in that of the Roman authorities. Lignadis refers (1989: 178, and n.12) to the 'Gospel style' of the Fourth Reading and notes that its 'thematic idea imitates the sacred narrative of the Passion', but he only identifies one of the more obvious allusions to Christ's Passion: μὴ γνωρίζοντας τί πράττει, echoing the words from the Cross, οὐ γὰρ οἴδασι τί ποιοῦσι (Luke 23.34). There are also allusions to (inter alia) the scourging of Christ, his being spat on by soldiers, his silence when questioned, and the women at the Crucifixion, ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι (Matthew 27.55).

4.6 Ἰδοὺ ἐγώ . . . μὲ δόξα θὰ περάσω:
The displacement of Christ by the narrator

«Τὰ Πάθη» opens with what is potentially one of the most daring appropriations of Christian language in AE, the two words ἰδοὺ ἐγώ (27:1-3):

> Ιδοr ἐγὼ λοιπόν,
> ὁ πλασμένος γιὰ τὶς μικρὲς Κόρες καὶ τὰ νησιὰ τοῦ Αἰγαίου·
> ὁ ἐραστὴς τοῦ σκιρτήματος τῶν ζαρκαδιῶν.

These lines are fairly closely modelled, as Lignadis points out, on lines from the Song of Songs:[131]

> ἰδοὺ οὗτος ἥκει πηδῶν ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη, διαλλόμενος ἐπὶ τοὺς βουνούς. ὅμοιός ἐστιν ἀδελφιδός μου τῇ δορκάδι ἢ νεβρῷ ἐλάφων ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη Βαιθήλ.

The two passages have a number of elements in common, but Elytis characteristically rearranges the elements he borrows. The speaker in the Song of Songs says that her *beloved* comes *leaping* and compares him to a *deer* (or gazelle), while the narrator in Elytis' text calls himself a *lover* of the *leaping* of *deer*. The Biblical context of lover and beloved is echoed in the narrator's description of himself as 'created for the young Maidens', who are associated with 'the islands of the Aegean', as the beloved of the Song of Songs is associated with 'the mountains of Bethel'.

Common to both texts too, of course, is the opening word ἰδού. In substituting ἐγώ for οὗτος Elytis puts the narrator in the position of the male lover in the Song of Songs, and it is surely significant that in traditional exegesis (to which it owes its place in the Canon) the Song of Songs is seen as an allegory of God's relation with his chosen people, or

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[131] Lignadis 1989: 97; Song of Songs 2.8-9.

Christ's relation with the Church. The implications of this for the appropriation involved are consistent with the further implications of the substitution of ἰδοὺ ἐγώ for ἰδοὺ οὗτος. The change of pronoun takes us into a much broader area of Biblical allusion.

The word sequence ἰδοὺ ἐγώ occurs about two hundred times in the Septuagint, and in 80% of these occurrences the speaker (in the patriarchal narratives or the utterances of the prophets) is God. In more than a third of the latter cases (i.e. in over a quarter of the total occurrences) the words ἰδου ἐγώ are preceded by one of two alternative formulae characteristic of OT prophetic utterance: τάδε λέγει Κύριος, or οὕτως εἶπε Κύριος. These formulae are sometimes followed by additional divine titles: Παντοκράτωρ, or ὁ Θεὸς Ἰσραήλ, or the duplication of Κύριος. Thus, in a prominent position— the opening words of the central and longest part of AE (and the first to be written)— Elytis puts into the mouth of his narrator an expression which, in a Biblical context, is the hallmark of divine utterance.[132]

It would be absurd to suggest that Elytis intends his narrator to be seen simply as identifying himself with God. And indeed, the narrator immediately describes himself as 'created' (πλασμένος), though it will, I think, be clear by now that this is not likely to mean created by God as a Christian would understand it. And what he is created 'for' is the world of sensual experience: 'young Maidens and the islands of the Aegean'. Sensuality is compatible with the Song of Songs to which these lines allude, but sorts ill with the God of the OT evoked in the opening ἰδοὺ ἐγώ.[133]

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[132] There are also nine instances of ἰδοὺ ἐγώ in the NT. In six of these the speaker is Christ: on four occasions he uses ἰδοὺ ἐγώ to refer to himself, and twice he quotes the words of God from the OT. At least seven of the OT instances where ἐγώ denotes God, and four of the NT instances where it denotes Christ or God, can be found in readings included in the *Synekdemos*.

[133] The association of the sensual with the sacred is reiterated later in Psalm I: among the

The prophetic context of so many of the OT instances of the words ἰδοὺ ἐγώ is suggestive here. In the course of «Τὰ Πάθη» the narrator increasingly assumes the role of prophet, and this is explicitly acknowledged in the title of Reading 6, «Προφητικόν».[134] The narrator's function as prophet is to exhort and encourage the Greek people in times of crisis. As prophet the narrator differs significantly from the prophets of the OT: whereas they spoke as the mouthpieces of God, prefacing their exhortations, threats and promises with the words 'thus saith the Lord, "Behold I . . ."' (*AV*), Elytis' narrator speaks on his own authority— and this is perhaps the fundamental significance of the appropriation of the divine words ἰδοὺ ἐγώ— for there is no place for the Judaeo-Christian God in the world of AE, except as the object of the poet's antagonism.

The opening lines of Psalm I recapitulate «Ἡ Γένεσις». The first five lines refer to the free impulses of youth before the encounter with 'the Others', while lines 6-9, beginning Ἰδοὺ ἐγώ καταντικρύ, take up the theme of opposition introduced at the end of «Ἡ Γένεσις». In the OT the words ἰδοὺ ἐγώ often preface God's promises, but more often they preface the announcement of his hostility, either towards the enemies of Israel or towards a recalcitrant Israel itself.[135]

From the appropriation of the OT hallmark of divine utterance at the beginning of the First Unit of «Τὰ Πάθη» we may now move forward to the end of the Second Unit, to the call to replace the Cross with a new

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poet's 'weapons' are τὰ φιλιὰ τὰ παλιὰ [. . .] ποὺ ἡ λαχτάρα μου ἄγιασε (27:20). The idea that desire can sanctify is an inversion of Christian moral values. See also the passage about purity, woman and desire in «Ἡ Γένεσις» (20:26-39), and Ode xi in which the narrator aspires to be a monk whose icons are naked girls in (64:1, 8-9, and see p.340 below). See also pp.319-22 above.

[134] Canto VIII of Palamas' *Δωδεκάλογος* has an almost identical title, «Προφητικός», and in Canto IV Palamas' narrator, the Gypsy, calls himself ὁ προφήτης (see pp.65, 68).

[135] This, for example, is typical of dozens of such utterances: ἰδοὺ ἐγώ ἐπάγω ἐπὶ τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον κακά (Jeremiah 11.11).

symbol and related themes,[136] and from there to the clearest and most sustained appropriations of the functions of Christ by the narrator in the closing sections of the third unit.

As if to confirm the well-developed analogy between Lefteris and Christ,[137] the Fourth Reading is immediately followed by an Ode whose metrical prototype is the Third Stasis of the Good Friday Encomia. Ode viii follows the prototype in its preoccupation with death and mourning, but differs from it in its lack of any element of hope. It contains many analogues of the sufferings of Christ, none of the Resurrection. When the first intimations of hope appear in Psalm XI they find expression in the relatively modern and secular symbol of the Mavroyenis Fountain, and in the exhortation to hold in remembrance Solomos and Papadiamantis. While these are both Christian writers, it is probably not for their Christianity that they are singled out, but for the purity of their language, and as representatives of the true Greek spirit. They are, surely, invoked as secular saints, in line with Elytis' canonization of naval leaders of the War of Independence in Psalm VI.[138] The narrator himself is among these new secular saints, for he proclaims in Ode iii (36:29), Πῆρα καὶ στεφανώθηκα τὴν ἄλω μόνος. All this is clearly a part of Elytis' 'way of holiness outside Christianity' (and later, in Psalm XII, the rejection of the central Christian symbol of the Cross, becomes explicit).

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[136] Some of the intervening material has already been discussed in §§4.5 and 4.6.

[137] See p.329 n.130.

[138] AE 40:23-5, appropriating βοηθὸς καὶ σκεπαστὴς from Moses' song of triumph (Exodus 15.2). Applying this phrase to Kanaris et al., Elytis implicitly repudiates the idea of God's agency in the Greek Revolution, providing a secular corrective to Solomos. In the *Hymn to Liberty* Solomos, alluding to the same OT episode (the Crossing of the Red Sea), compares a defeated Turkish force to the Egyptians, and aspires to the voice of Moses in order to thank God for victory (stanzas 118-21; compare Exodus 15.1, 20). Significantly, in relation to Elytis, Solomos then turns his attention (stanzas 126-32) to a naval victory (Solomos 1961: 90-93).

Lignadis identifies the 'thematic idea' of Psalm XI with Romanos' Kontakion No. 9, 'On the Woman of Samaria',[139] and there are verbal connections with the Kontakion and its Gospel source; but the more one sees the connections, the more un-Biblical, or even anti-Biblical, Elytis' Psalm must appear, for it substitutes Greek names for those in the Gospel and Romanos, and the natural for the supernatural. Though Psalm XI utilizes the Christian symbolism of life-giving water, it diverts attention away from its Christian signification. The basic idea of Psalm XI is that the sources of hope for Greeks lie within their own tradition, in the tangible beauty of their creations (the Mavroyenis fountain) and the words of their greatest writers. The following Psalm XII mounts a more direct assault on Christian symbolism. The two Psalms are thematically linked, since the key symbol in Psalm XII, the trident entwined by a dolphin, is frequently carved on fountains.[140]

In Psalm XII the narrator calls on the Winds to draw a dolphin before his eyes (55:15-18),

> Νὰ περνᾶ καὶ νὰ λύνει τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ Σταυροῦ
> καὶ στὰ δέντρα τὸ ξύλο νὰ ἐπιστρέφει
> Ὁ βαθὺς τριγμὸς νὰ μοῦ θυμίζει ἀκόμη
> ὅτι αὐτὸς ποὺ εἶμαι ὑπάρχω!

While what is most important here is what is new— the dissolution or dismantling of the Cross— these four lines are rich in internal allusions. The desire that the 'wood' (of the Cross) should 'return to the trees' indicates that the Crucifixion is part of the dishonouring and annihilation of the trees through their use as instruments of execution (52:3-5, 54:13). The last two lines are clearly intended to remind us of two critical moments in «Ἡ Γένεσις»: first, the response of the narrator's young self to the first

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139 Lignadis 1989: 188.

140 Elytis in Kechagioglou 1995: 59.

intimation of 'danger' and 'the ancient remains of love' in his own body (21:28-9):

> Καὶ πολὺ τότε σφίχθηκε ἡ καρδιά μου
> *ἦταν τὸ πρῶτο τρίξιμο τοῦ ξύλου μέσα μου*

and secondly, the critical moment of union between the young self and the real self.[141] While these events are part of the retrospective narrative, the appeal to the Winds to bring the transforming symbol of the dolphin belongs to the time of narration.

The Cross, along with other Christian symbols, institutions and practices,[142] is to be abolished to make way for a new symbol. The dolphin must be joined with the Trident to produce the 'sign' which the narrator truly is, and with its appearance he anticipates a kind of apotheosis (55:28-32):

> στὴν καρδιὰ τὴν Τρίαινα χτυπήσετέ μου
> καὶ σταυρώσετέ μου την μὲ τὸ δελφίνι
> Τὸ σημεῖο ποὺ εἶμαι ἀλήθεια ὁ ἴδιος
> μὲ τὴν πρώτη νεότητα ν' ἀνεβῶ
> στὸ γλαυκὸ τ' οὐρανοῦ — κι ἐκεῖ νὰ ἐξουσιάσω !

Galani sees in the expression στὴν καρδιὰ τὴν Τρίαινα χτυπήσετέ μου an allusion to the piercing of Christ's side with a spear.[143] But Elytis alludes to the Crucifixion in order to negate it, to 'dissolve the pattern of

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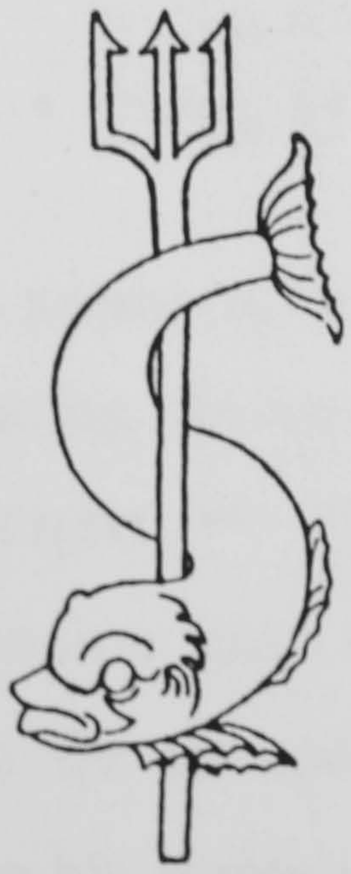
[141] See p.312.

[142] It is also the role of the dolphin νὰ σβήνει τὴν πλάκα τοῦ βωμοῦ, 'to change the meaning of martyrdom' and 'to drown the priest' (55:11-12, 14). Galani (1988: 183-4) following Lignadis (1989: 189-90) interprets the reference to the 'altar' in terms of the Eucharist. It seems more likely, though, that Elytis' idea was to 'erase' (νὰ σβήνει) from altar slabs the carved names of saints whose relics they enclosed; hence the reference to martyrdom.

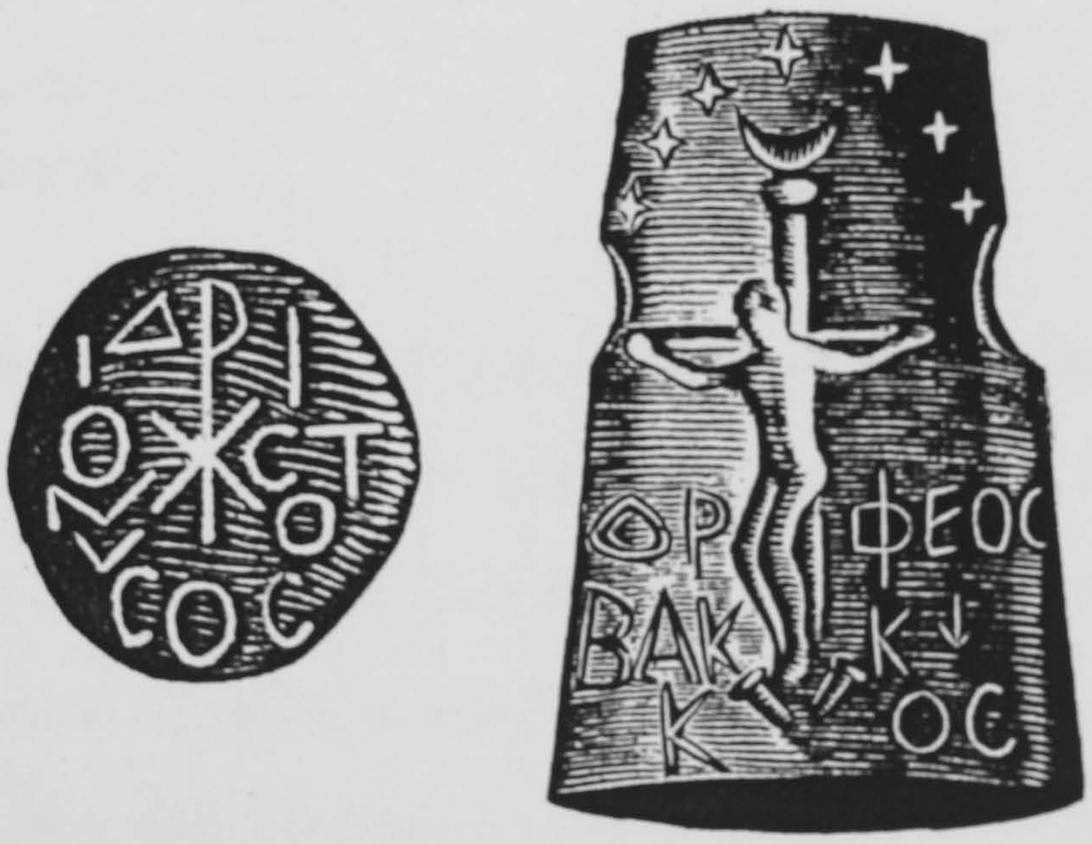
[143] Galani 1988: 186-7.

the Cross'. Just as his σταυρώσετε does not mean 'crucify', but is used in its horticultural or stockbreeding sense to indicate a fusion of two different strains, so too his Trident is not to be used here as a weapon. The phrase, Στὴν καρδιὰ τὴν Τρίαινα χτυπήσετέ μου, though it contains elements analogous to all those in the description of the soldier's action at the Crucifixion— λόγχῃ αὐτοῦ τὴν πλευρὰν ἔνυξε[144]— indicates not a wounding but a metaphorical striking or stamping of an impression of the 'sign' (σημεῖο) of the Trident and dolphin onto the narrator's heart.[145]

In aspiring to replace the Cross, Elytis is emulating, and perhaps trying to go beyond, Sikelianos. As Sikelianos' image of the Crucified Bacchus is actually illustrated (as Orpheus-Bacchus) in *'Αντίδωρο*, so the editions of AE have an image of the Trident crossed with the dolphin on the title page (see illustrations below). While Sikelianos makes the Cross



From the title page of *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί*.



From the title page and second page following of *'Αντίδωρο* (Sikelianos1943). The right-hand image is described as an 'ancient Gnostic seal-stone' (*ibid.* [231]). The left hand image might be the base of the same seal.

144 John 19.34.

145 While the Trident combined with the dolphin replaces the Cross, the Τρίαινα itself perhaps challenges the Trinity (Τριάδα) of Christian theology.

into an ambiguous symbol, still an instrument of death but also the life-giving vine, Elytis abolishes it altogether.[145a] While the Trident is still in essence a weapon, the dolphin entwined around it is neither dead nor wounded. Having excluded the element of death from this sign which he truly is, the narrator, in his appropriation of Christ, can pass directly to the Ascension without need of Resurrection. If the Resurrection is represented at all here it is in the return of youth, with which the narrator is to rise into the 'blue of heaven', in what the verbs ν' ἀνεβῶ and νὰ ἐξουσιάσω, show to be an appropriation of Christ's Ascension.

In the NT the Ascension is conveyed through passive verbs (ἀνελήφθη /ἀναφέρετο/ὁ ἀναληφθεὶς εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν[146]), but in liturgical texts the active ἀναβαίνω, used by Elytis, is also found. The first *idiomelon* for Orthros contains the phrase 'Ανέβη Χριστός, and in the services for Ascension Day the following formula, from Psalm 46.6 (47.5), is used repeatedly:

'Ανέβη ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἀλαλαγμῷ,
Κύριος ἐν φωνῇ σάλπιγγος.

This seems to be one of the two texts Elytis principally has in mind, replacing its two adverbial phrases with his own: μὲ τὴν πρώτη νεότητα.[147] The narrator's reunion with his youth in his imagined Ascension may reflect another liturgical expression: ἀνέβη Χριστὸς ὅπου ἦν τὸ πρότερον.[148] But the second text which Elytis undoubtedly has in his sights is the ending of Matthew. Like John, Matthew contains no

[145a] Elytis' replacement of the Cross by the dolphin and Trident may owe something to the Epiphany passage in Sikelianos «Ἀνερύκειο Βαφεῖον» where the youth who retrieves the cross from the sea is a ναυαγός and the cross in his hands ὡς φάρι (see p. 248 above).

[146] Mark 16.19; Luke 24.51; Acts 1.11.

[147] Εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀναβαίνω from *oikos* 8 of Romanos' Kontakion No.32 (the only liturgical text cited in this context by Galani, 1988: 187) is at first sight closer to Elytis, since it couples the first person of the verb with 'into heaven'; but 'into heaven' is entailed in any reference to the Ascension, and in στὸ γλαυκὸ τ' οὐρανοῦ Elytis is probably alluding to Solomos as Lignadis suggests (1989:191).

[148] First *idiomelon* in Vespers for Ascension Day.

reference to the Ascension, but in Jesus' final post-Resurrection appearance to the disciples (on a mountain in Galilee) he tells them,

ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς.[149]

It is this ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ which Elytis appropriates, both semantically and structurally, in concluding the second unit of «Τὰ Πάθη» with κι ἐκεῖ (that is, στὸ γλαυκὸ τ' οὐρανοῦ) νὰ ἐξουσιάσω.

Christ's 'authority in heaven' is particularly associated with his role as Judge in the Parousia.[150] The divine authority to judge has already been appropriated by the people as a whole in Psalm IX,[151] and in the third unit of «Τὰ Πάθη», in Ode xi, judgement will become the prerogative of the narrator himself (see below).

The values of the narrator's youth have been resurrected, or, at least, have survived the many trials which began with the confrontation with others in «Ἡ Γένεσις» and continued in the experience of the Albanian campaign and the Occupation. With the emergence of the new symbol, the return of the narrator's youth, his metaphorical Ascension, and his empowerment, the second unit of «Τὰ Πάθη» concludes on an exultant note. And yet, in terms of the experience of the Greek people (the public narrative) the worst is yet to come, since the third unit is concerned with the Civil War. But in terms of the narrator's experience (the private narrative) the crucial challenge has already been faced and overcome, in a

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[149] Matthew 28.18.

[150] See John 5.25-9.

[151] In a clear repudiation of divine judgement the narrator declares Καὶ ἡμέρα Κρίσεως καμιά, ἐπειδὴ / ἐμεῖς ἀδελφοί, ἐμεῖς ἡ μέρα τῆς Κρίσεως (47:16-17). The Christian concept of the ἡμέρα κρίσεως is based on a number of merely passing references to it in the NT (Matthew 10.15, 11.22, 11.24, 12.36; II Peter 2.9, 3.7; I John 4.17). It was a part of late Jewish apocalyptic evidently taken for granted by the NT authors. See II Esdras 7.38, 7.103-04, 12.34 and *passim*.

fashion which we are clearly invited to see as Christ-like; not in the spirit of the *imitatio Christi*, but as a radical displacement of Christ, for the narrator takes to himself the language of Christ's Ascension and authority, and, exercising his undelegated authority, he abolishes Christ's symbol of the Cross, replacing it with his own symbol, which is also a symbol of himself. The displacement of Christ is confirmed and amplified in the latter part of the third unit of «Τὰ Πάθη».

Psalm XVI, addressed to God, was discussed briefly in §4.5, in connection with the 'revolt against God'. While it operates on a general level, addressing broad moral and cultural issues, it is, at the same time, expressing a part of the narrator's personal history. It reiterates the loss of the values of youth through the loss of innocence, and their eventual return. Here 'birds' are the symbols of youth and their disappearance attributed to the actions of God (63:5-6):

Φύσηξες καὶ μὲ κύκλωσαν οἱ τρικυμίες
ἕνα–ἕνα μοῦ πῆρες τὰ πουλιά.

At the end of the Psalm these lines are transformed to express the reversal of the process when physical desire overcomes the forces of repression (63:28-9):

Φύσηξες καὶ λαχτάρισαν τὰ σωθικά μου
ἕνα–ἕνα μοῦ γύρισαν τὰ πουλιά!

This is the last time the past tense is used in AE in connection with the narrator's personal experience.[152] Ode xi and the Sixth Reading are primarily in the future tense, Ode xii and Psalms XVII and XVIII in the

[152] The imperfect tenses and the demoticized aorist participles in Psalm XVIII (70:6-11) are only partial exceptions, since they link the narrator to the remote or mythological past and not to an earlier stage of his personal experience.

present. The time of the narrative has finally and definitively caught up with the time of narration, and the narrator, in part through the act of narration (τραγούδησα), has achieved a degree of detachment from his personal history as well as that of his country, signified by the vow to beome a monk with which Ode xi opens.

It is of course no ordinary monk that he intends to become, but Μοναχὸς τῶν θαλερῶν πραγμάτων (64:1) The images of his 'icons' will be ἄχραντα like the Panagia, but they will be 'girls dressed only in the linen of the sea' (64:8-9), like Aphrodite rising naked from the foam. The redefinition of purity implied here is made more explicit: ἡ ἀγνότη μου is associated with 'the instinct of the myrtle', 'the muscles of beasts' and 'my lusty entrails' (64:10-14).

While the Ode begins with the relatively modest intention to become a 'monk', it ends on a far more ambitious note (64:22-8):

Ἀλλὰ τότε στὶς ἔξ ❀ τῶν ὑψωμένων κρίνων
Ποὺ ἡ κρίση μου θὰ κά ❀ νει ρῆγμα τοῦ Καιροῦ
Ἡ ἐνδεκάτη ἐντολὴ ❀ θ' ἀναδυθεῖ ἀπ' τὰ μάτια μου
Ἢ θά 'ναι αὐτὸς ❀ ὁ κόσμος ἢ δὲ θά 'ναι
Ὁ Τοκετός ❀ ἡ Θέωσις τὸ Ἀεὶ
Ποὺ μὲ τὰ δίκαια τῆς ψυχῆς ❀ μου θά 'χω
Κηρύξει ❀ ὁ δικαιότερος.

Again the narrator displaces Christ, appropriating the Christian language of divine authority and judgement, and of the creative power to determine what shall be (θά 'χω / Κηρύξει).

The phrase 'eleventh commandment' alludes, obviously, to the Ten Commandments, but also, and more significantly, to those sayings in which Jesus goes beyond them. In John there is Jesus' 'new commandment' (ἐντολὴν καινὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους), and the commandment given to him by the Father, of which he says, ἡ ἐντολὴ

αὐτοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιός ἐστιν.[153] (In Elytis the 'eleventh commandment' is associated with τὸ 'Αεί.)

The verb κηρύσσω also connects the narrator with Christ. It is widely used in the NT of the preaching of Jesus, John the Baptist and the Apostles, and in the words of Jesus it is often associated with the 'gospel':

> κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ.[154]

The 'kingdom' is the 'kingdom of heaven' which is the central concept in the teaching of Jesus (at least in the Synoptic Gospels) and which is opposed to 'this world', the οἰκουμένη in which the gospel is preached. What Elytis' narrator 'will have proclaimed' is quite different: it is that if 'the eternal' (τὸ 'Αεί) and 'the union with God' (ἡ Θέωσις) are not to be in this world, then they are not to be at all.

Justice is associated with this proclamation, and the narrator describes himself as ὁ δικαιότερος. In the NT δίκαιος, used in a variety of senses, is an adjective which perhaps more than any other characterizes Christ. It is even used of him by Judas, Pilate and the centurion at the Crucifixion.[155] In Apostolic preaching ὁ δίκαιος is a Messianic title applied to Christ.[156] John says 'we have an advocate with the Father' 'Ιησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον, and Paul calls Christ ὁ δίκαιος κριτής.[157] Elytis' superlative, ὁ δικαιότερος, points particularly to the phrase κριτὰ δικαιότατε used of Christ in a prayer already quoted.[158] The narrator

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[153] John 13.34, 12.50; the latter was quoted in connection with the 'commandment' of Αὐτός in «'Η Γένεσις», which this passage in Ode xi obviously reiterates (see p.308).

[154] Matthew 24.14.

[155] Matthew 27.4, 24; Luke 23.47.

[156] Acts 3.14, 7.52, 22.14.

[157] I John 2.1; II Timothy 4.8.

[158] See p.311. Κριτὰ δικαιότατε is also the refrain of Romanos Kontakion No. 34.

speaks also of τὰ δίκαια τῆς ψυχῆς μου and of ἡ κρίση μου. Taken together these expressions appropriate Christ's words, ἡ κρίσις ἡ ἐμὴ δικαία ἐστίν.[159] The narrator's judgement 'will make a break in Time', and this is suggestive of the discontinuity involved in the concepts of 'the end' or 'the last day' associated with Christ's return as Judge.

These extensive appropriations by the narrator of attributes and functions of Christ are consistent with the implications at the end of Psalm XII, where the narrator foresaw his ascension into heaven, ἐκεῖ νὰ ἐξουσιάσω. Now, in the last stanza of Ode xi, he envisages the exercise of divine ἐξουσία in terms of judgement and commandment.

After this, his role as 'exiled Poet' uttering oracular prophecies in the Sixth Reading is something of an anti-climax. The context is still Apocalyptic: ἡ Χτίσις [. . .] θα φρίξει. Ταραχὴ θὰ πέσει στὸν Ἄδη (65:5); and the scenario is one of judgement; but the mixture of contemporary political detail and theological metaphor is too crude and extravagant to be convincing: Βλέπω τοὺς Στρατοδίκες νὰ καῖνε σὰν κεριά, στὸ μεγάλο τραπέζι τῆς Ἀναστάσεως (66:17-18), for example.

For present purposes the most interesting part of the Sixth Reading is its prophetic-sounding ending (66:35—67:5):

> Καὶ τὸν πρῶτο λόγο του ὁ στερνὸς τῶν ἀνθρώπων θὰ πεῖ, ν' ἀψηλώσουν τὰ χόρτα, ἡ γυναίκα στὸ πλάι σου σὰν ἀχτίδα τοῦ ἥλιου νὰ βγεῖ. Καὶ πάλι θὰ λατρέψει τὴ γυναίκα καὶ θὰ τὴν πλαγιάσει πάνου στὰ χόρτα καθὼς ποὺ ἐτάχθη. Καὶ θὰ λάβουνε τὰ ὄνειρα ἐκδίκηση, καὶ θὰ σπείρουνε γενεὲς στοὺς αἰῶνες τῶν αἰώνων.[160]

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[159] John 5.30.

[160] Apart from the Biblical echoes discussed below, this passage also resumes motifs in Palamas' *Δωδεκάλογος*: the Gypsy's mating with the περδικόστηθη τσιγγάνα which will eventually produce the στερνοπαίδι (the Superman), and that of Tearless (πατριάρχης τοῦ γένους) with Laughterless (see pp.66, 73).

The 'last of men' cannot but remind us of the first of men, Adam; but what Elytis almost certainly alludes to here is a Pauline text which brings together Christ and Adam in the doctrine of the Last or Second Adam. Paul's subject is 'the resurrection of the dead':

> οὕτω καὶ γέγραπται· ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν· ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν· ἀλλ' οὐ πρῶτον τὸ πνευματικόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ψυχικόν, ἔπειτα τὸ πνευματικόν. ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός, ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος ὁ Κύριος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ.[161]

For Elytis there is no distinction between the 'physical' (ψυχικός) and the 'spiritual' (πνευματικός). His 'last of men', who is also, the context suggests, ὁ Ποιητής, is associated with the 'physical' and the 'earth': he lays the woman on the earth, or, rather, on the grass that grows from it. And yet he usurps the role of the Creator (the ambiguity of Ποιητής is very much in evidence here), for both the growth of the grass and the emergence of the woman are the consequences of his 'first word' (in Genesis God's first word is γενηθήτω).[162] The coupling of the 'last of men' with the woman takes places 'as had been ordained'. This is probably an allusion to God's command to the first man and the first woman, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth',[163] for Elytis' second Adam and Eve 'will sow generations unto the ages of ages'. The last phrase is a liturgical coda which concludes the common doxology and many other prayers. In a shorter form it has its place in the second Creation narrative. After the Fall, God expels Adam from paradise 'lest he [. . .] take also of

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[161] I Corinthians 15.45-7.

[162] Genesis 1.3.

[163] Genesis 1.28.

the tree of life and live for ever' (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα).[164] In the light of this, the sowing of generations 'unto the ages of ages' appears like an act of defiance in which man achieves a kind of immortality.

The liturgical coda derives from such NT texts as Ephesians 3.21, where Paul combines it with εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς, perhaps echoing the ending of Psalm 44(45),which appears to be the text which prompted Elytis to combine 'generations' with unto the ages of ages'. The Psalm is not in praise of God; but is a 'love song' or ᾠδὴ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ (v.1) addressed to a king (v.2(1)). It speaks of his descendants (ἀντὶ τῶν πατέρων σου ἐγενήθησαν οἱ υἱοί σου, (v.17(16)), and concludes (v.18(17)):

> μνησθήσομαι τοῦ ὀνόματός σου ἐν πάσῃ γενεᾷ καὶ γενεᾷ· διὰ τοῦτο λαοὶ ἐξομολογήσονταί σοι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα του αἰῶνος.

The Orthodox Church evidently treats this Psalm as an allegory addressed to Christ, since it is appointed for Prime at Christmas.[165] This is the context in which Elytis may have come across it in the *Synekdemos*, and thus, though its original OT context is secular, Elytis' secular use of it could be considered appropriative.

The apocalyptic tone of the Sixth Reading is resumed in the Ode that follows. Though the metre of Ode xii is that of the first Ode of the Akathistos Canon (and to a limited extent Elytis imitates the language of the metrical model),[166] the conceptual background of Elytis' Ode is the Apocalypse. The first clear indication of this comes in the third stanza,

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[164] Genesis 3.22.

[165] A phrase from Psalm 44.3 (45.2), ὡραῖος κάλλει παρὰ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων is applied, slightly modified, to Christ in the Good Friday Encomia (see p.48 n.32)

[166] See p.296.

where the narrator speaks of burying his 'secret dead' and adds (68:11-12),

Καὶ τὸ λῶρο τὸ χρυσὸ ❀ τῶν προδομένων
Ἀστέρων τους κό ❀ βω νὰ πέσουν στὴν ἄβυσσο.

The falling of stars is part of the tradition of Judaeo-Christian apocalyptic,[167] but the motif is probably most familiar from the Apocalypse itself:

οἱ ἀστέρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔπεσαν εἰς τὴν γῆν.[168]

The fifth stanza of Ode xii begins (68:17),

Γυμνώνω τὰ στήθη μου ❀ καὶ ξαπολυοῦνται οἱ ἄνεμοι,

alluding to the angels of the Apocalypse who, for a time, hold back the winds of destruction:

εἶδον τέσσαρας ἀγγέλους ἑστῶτας ἐπὶ τὰς τέσσαρας γωνίας τῆς γῆς, κρατοῦντας τοὺς τέσσαρας ἀνέμους τῆς γῆς.

These are the angels who 'had been given the power to harm earth and sea', but were told not to exercise their power 'till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads'. The 144,000 of the 'sealed' who are now listed (12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel) seem to be the same as 'the great multitude which no man could number [. . .] clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands'.[169] Elytis has his own version of the redeemed, who do not carry palm branches but, by implication, a sword made of flowers (68:15-16):

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[167] See Daniel 8.10, II Esdras 5.5, Matthew 24.29.

[168] Revelation 6.13 (see also 8.10, 9.1).

[169] Revelation 7.1-9.

Κι ἀπὸ γιούλια καὶ ναρκίσ ❀ σους τὸ καινούριο
Μαχαίρι ἑτοιμά ❀ ζω πού ἁρμόζει στούς Ἥρωες

The redeemed of the Apocalypse are described in terms suggestive of heroes: they are those who have survived 'the great tribulation', οἱ ἐρχόμενοι ἐκ τῆς θλίψεως τῆς μεγάλης.[170]

The Apocalypse ends with the appearance of 'a new heaven and a new earth' and the 'new Jerusalem', whose description alludes to that of the Garden of Eden in Genesis.[171] Elytis' Ode also ends with the reappearance of paradise, but its location and the means by which it is achieved are quite different from those of the Apocalypse. It is one of the many inconsistencies of the Apocalypse that the four angels who held back the winds are never referred to again, and the winds are never, apparently, released. (The destruction of the earth does follow, but it is accomplished by other angels with other powers.) Elytis' narrator 'bare[s] [his] breast and the winds are unleashed', but these are not winds of destruction: they sweep up the debris of earlier destruction ('ruins and destroyed souls') and 'cleanse the earth of dense clouds' to reveal paradise: νὰ φανοῦν τὰ Λιβάδια τὰ Πάντερπνα (68:17-20).[172]

In Elytis' vision the earth is not destroyed, no new earth is created. The Elysian Fields are revealed here in 'this world'. Moreover, his is an apocalypse without God. It is the narrator who unleashes the cleansing winds and is thus responsible for the appearance of paradise; it is the narrator who prepares the new weapons fit for Heroes which are, in effect, the narrator's own weapons, the weapons of the Poet; and it is the narrator whose words, in the first line of Ode xii (68:1), cause the sea to rejoice.

In Psalms XVII and XVIII, which conclude «Τὰ Πάθη», we find

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170 Revelation 7.14.

171 Revelation 21.1-2, 22.1-5.

172 Compare the ὑπερούσια Πολιτεία of Palamas *Φλογέρα* (see pp.65-6, 71-3).

what are perhaps the most obvious appropriations by the narrator of elements of language which, in their original contexts, belong to Christ. No reader at all familiar with the Christian tradition could fail to notice the narrator's application to himself of the 'Hosanna' of the Entry into Jerusalem in Psalm XVII, or his imitation of a Beatitude in Psalm XVIII. These are, however, only parts of a complex web of allusions in these two Psalms.

The opening line of Psalm XVII (69:1),

Σε χωρα μακρινὴ καὶ ἀναμάρτητη τώρα πορεύομαι,

is repeated later (69:26) and, with the substitution of ἀρυτίδωτη for ἀναμάρτητη, twice in Psalm XVIII (70:1, 19). The repetition draws attention to a line which in general terms is reminiscent of many of Jesus' statements in the Johannine Farewell Discourses and in particular of expressions employing the same verb, such as the following:

πορεύομαι ἑτοιμάσαι τόπον ὑμῖν.

ἐγὼ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου πορεύομαι.

πάλιν ἀφίημι τὸν κόσμον καὶ πορεύομαι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα.[173]

In what is essentially the same context (Jesus' departure from the world) Acts uses the same verb to refer to the Ascension:

εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν πορευομένου αὐτοῦ.[174]

This and the second of the three quotations from John are reflected in Elytis' word order: an adverbial phrase of place preceding the verb. An

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[173] John 14.2, 14.12 (compare 14.28), 16.28.

[174] Acts 1.10 (see also 1.11).

intentional allusion to Christ's Ascension or departure from the world seems highly probable here— Elytis substituting his 'distant and sinless/unwrinkled country' for the NT 'heaven'— particularly after the appropriation of the Ascension in Psalm XII.

The 'Hosanna' is embedded in a passage containing multiple Biblical and liturgical allusions (69:9-17):

Μεγάλα μυστήρια βλέπω καὶ παράδοξα:
Κρήνη τὴν κρύπτη τῆς Ἑλένης.
Τρίαινα μὲ δελφίνι τὸ σημάδι τοῦ Σταυροῦ.
Πύλη λευκὴ τὸ ἀνόσιο συρματόπλεγμα.
Ὅθε μὲ δόξα θα περάσω.
Τὰ λόγια ποὺ μὲ πρόδωσαν καὶ τὰ ραπίσματα ἔχοντας
γίνει μυρτιὲς καὶ φοινικόκλαρα:
Ὡσαννά σημαίνοντας ὁ ἐρχόμενος!

Galani offers five potential liturgical sources for the initial line above. The first of these, from a canon of Kosmas, is so close that the others may be ignored:

Μυστήριον ξένον ὁρῶ καὶ παράδοξον.[175]

The canon in question is the canon for Orthros on Christmas day and Elytis could easily have found it in the Synekdemos. Besides, the first four of the lines from Psalm XVII just quoted are a syntactically accurate parody of the *heirmos* of Ode 9 of this Canon. The lineation below is simply intended to make the parallel clearer:

Μυστήριον ξένον ὁρῶ καὶ παράδοξον·
οὐρανὸν τὸ σπήλαιον·
θρόνον χερουβικὸν τὴν παρθένον·
τὴν φάτνην χωρίον·
ἐν ᾧ ἀνακλίθη ὁ ἀχώρητος, Χριστὸς ὁ Θεός [. . .].

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[175] Galani 1988: 212-13; so too Mitsakis (1982: 296).

In each case the statement 'I see mysteries/a mystery' is followed by nominal clauses of the accusative and infinitive type (in apposition to μυστήρια/μυστήριον), from which the copula εἶναι is omitted. In each of the first two the complement (without article) is followed by the subject (with article). Elytis keeps this order for the third, while in the Canon it is reversed. The third statement is followed in each case by an adjectival clause modifying its complement, and it is here that Elytis achieves, with great subtlety, the displacement of Christ by the narrator. In place of 'a container in which the uncontainable, Christ the God, was laid' we find 'gates [. . .] whence I with glory shall pass'. The effect may have been hitherto unnoticed because it depends on the recognition of the parody of the Christmas Canon.[176]

In these lines Elytis substitutes his own 'mysteries' for those which Kosmas sees in the Nativity. Among these is the 'the sign of the Cross' identified with 'a Trident with a dolphin'. Here is another subtle displacement of Christ by the narrator, mediated this time by an intratextual allusion, for in Psalm XII the narrator calls the Trident with the dolphin 'the sign which I myself truly am' (55:30).

The reference to the 'gates' through which the narrator 'will pass with glory' takes the displacement of Christ further, and brings us close to the 'Hosanna'. Elytis is alluding to Psalm 23(24).7, traditionally associated with the Entry into Jerusalem:

> ἄρατε πύλας, οἱ ἄρχοντες ὑμῶν, καὶ ἐπάρθητε, πύλαι αἰώνιοι, καὶ εἰσελεύσεται ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης.

The 'king of glory' is 'the Lord mighty in battle [. . .] the Lord of

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176 Galani, who identifies the source, seems not to have noticed the broader affinity of the two texts.

hosts',[177] that is, for the Psalmist, the God of Israel, and in the Christian tradition, Christ. The appropriation of the 'glory' of Christ reinforces the displacement of Christ already implicit in the substitution, in terms of the parodic structure, of ὅθε μὲ δόξα θὰ περάσω for a reference to the Christchild. But the phrase μὲ δόξα θὰ περάσω itself is an appropriation of almost staggering arrogance and directness. These are, essentially, the words of God at one of the high points of the OT. In a passage where the Septuagint differs substantially from the Hebrew texts on which the *AV* and *RSV* are based, Moses says to God, ἐμφάνισόν μοι σεαυτόν, and God replies,

> ἐγὼ παρελεύσομαι πρότερός σου τῇ δόξῃ μου.[178]

Elytis simply condenses and modernizes, retaining the tell-tale future tense, which is rather unexpected in the context of his Psalm XVII.[179] Thus, in the middle of a complex appropriation of many linguistic elements denoting God the Son, the narrator appropriates the words of God the Father for good measure.

The displacement of Christ becomes more obvious in what follows. 'The words that betrayed me' allude to the Betrayal of Jesus by Judas, and perhaps also to Peter's Denial, and more generally to the desertion of Jesus by all the disciples.[180] The reference to ραπίσματα involves a more specific allusion to Christ's Passion. The word is used by John to describe

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[177] Psalm 23(24).8-10.

[178] Exodus 33.18-19.

[179] Otherwise only occurring in a subsequent variant: "Οπου ἁγνὸς θὰ περπατήσω (69:22) which probably also echoes Revelation 3.4, where Christ says of 'those who have not soiled their garments' περπατήσουσι μετ' ἐμοῦ ἐν λευκοῖς, ὅτι ἄξιοί εἰσιν. (On Elytis' probable awareness of cognates of ἄξιόν ἐστι in the Apocalypse see pp.357-9.)

[180] Elytis' variant, Τὰ δάκρυα ποὺ μὲ πρόδωσαν (69:23) suggests Peter, who, recalling Christ's prophecy of the Denial, ἔκλαυσε πικρῶς (Matthew 26.75).

Christ's treatment first by an officer of the high priest and later by Pilate's soldiers (ἐδίδουν αὐτῷ ῥαπίσματα).[181] Only John specifies the kind of branches with which the people of Jerusalem greeted Jesus: ἔλαβον τὰ βαΐα τῶν φοινίκων.[182] Elytis' phrase, μυρτιὲς καὶ φοινικόκλαρα, specifying two kinds of branches, has liturgical counterparts such as βαΐων καὶ κλάδων and κλάδους ἐλαίων [...] καὶ βαΐα.[183] While φοινικόκλαρα is equivalent to βαΐα τῶν φοινίκων, or even to βαΐα alone (meaning 'palm fronds'), μυρτιές belongs to the symbolism of AE.[184]

The reference to palms is followed by the 'Hosanna' associated with them in John. Elytis' syntactically ambiguous line, 'Ωσαννά σημαίνοντας ὁ ἐρχόμενος, condenses the words with which the people of Jerusalem are said to have welcomed Jesus as Messiah:

> ὡσαννά, εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι Κυρίου, ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ.[185]

But in a curious temporal reversal, typical of Elytis' approach to Biblical material (he has no desire to create systematic analogies), these elements of Christ's Passion have 'become' the palms of Palm Sunday. Despite the difficulty of construing Elytis' line, it is clear that ὁ ἐρχόμενος denotes the narrator, the 'I' who 'will pass' through the 'gates'.

The appropriation of words and roles which belong to Christ is continued in Psalm XVIII. Having clearly taken the place of Christ in the previous Psalm, the narrator now speaks of his followers and those who

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[181] John 18.22, 19.3.

[182] John 12.13. Mark 11.8 has only στοιβάδας and Matthew 21.8 κλάδους ἀπὸ τῶν δένδρων, while Luke is silent on this matter.

[183] Both occur in the fourth *idiomelon* in Orthros for Palm Sunday.

[184] See AE 20:8, 44:4, 64:10, 69:15, 70:5, 87:17, and especially 46:1 where the myrtle is associated with glory and with the liturgically derived phrase Τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἥλιε νοητέ (see Galani 1989: 171-3).

[185] John 12.13.

worship him. In lines 2-3 he says that the 'azure girls' and the 'little stone horses' (images characteristic of ὁ κόσμος ὁ μικρὸς, ὁ μέγας) follow him (70:2-3), and then (70:5-7) that

> Γενεὲς μυρτιᾶς μ' ἀναγνωρίζουν
> ἀπὸ τότε ποὺ ἔτρεμα στὸ τέμπλο τοὺ νεροῦ,
> ἅγιος, ἅγιος, φωνάζοντας.

The word sequence, γενεὲς μ' ἀναγνωρίζουν ἀπὸ τότε, suggests an allusion to the Magnificat:

> ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσί με πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαί.[186]

But, whereas in the Magnificat Mary continues,

> ὅτι ἐποίησέ μοι μεγαλεῖα ὁ δυνατὸς καὶ ἅγιον τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.[187]

in Elytis it is the speaker, the narrator himself, to whom the word ἅγιος is applied. The expression, ἅγιος, ἅγιος, φωνάζοντας points, however, much more clearly to the words which, in Isaiah's vision of God, the Seraphim ἐκέκραγεν (compare Elytis' φωνάζοντας):

> ἅγιος, ἅγιος, ἅγιος Κύριος σαβαώθ, πλήρης πᾶσα ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξας αὐτοῦ.[188]

Or, perhaps even more pertinently, to the adaptation of these words for the 'four living creatures' around the throne of God in the Apocalypse (note here again the expression ὁ ἐρχόμενος):

> ἅγιος, ἅγιος, ἅγιος Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ἦν καὶ

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186 Luke 1.48.

187 Luke 1.49.

188 Isaiah 6.3.

ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.[189]

The narrator has in effect proclaimed himself the object of worship; and that worship is to be expresssed in terms characteristic of the worship which in the Christian tradition supernatural beings direct towards God.

The connection with the Apocalypse appears stronger when one recalls that the 'azure girls' and the 'little stone horses' who follow the narrator have τὸν τροχίσκο τοῦ ἥλιου στὸ πλατὺ μέτωπο (70:4). The redeemed of the Apocalypse who worship the Lamb have τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν, and for them (according to the verse immediately following) there is 'no need of lamp or light of sun (φωτὸς ἡλίου) for God illumines them'.[190]

A more transparent allusion to Christ follows in Psalm XVIII, but it is not immediately clear that it is also connected with the narrator (70:8-11):

Ὁ νικήσαντας τὸν Ἄδη καὶ τὸν Ἔρωτα σώσαντας,
αὐτὸς ὁ Πρίγκιπας τῶν Κρίνων εἶναι.
Κι ἀπὸ κεῖνες πάλι τὶς πνοὲς τῆς Κρήτης,
μιὰ στιγμὴ ζωγραφιζόμουν.

Despite the archaic flavour of the curious aorist participles with the indeclinable ending of the modern present participle, the first of these lines does not appear to be a direct adaptation of any liturgical text. There can be little doubt, though, that what Elytis means to evoke is Christ's victory over Hades and the salvation of Adam, which, in liturgical texts, are frequently associated with the Descent into Hell, as in the Good Friday Encomia, First Stasis, No. 25:

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189 Revelation 4.8 (cited by Lignadis, 1989: 239). See pp.357-9 for further allusions in Psalm XVIII to the heavenly worship of the Apocalypse.

190 Revelation 22.4-5 (my translation): see also 7.3, 9.4 and 14.1.

'Επὶ γῆς κατῆλθες, ἵνα σώσῃς 'Αδάμ, καὶ ἐν γῇ μὴ εὑρηκὼς
τοῦτον, δέσποτα, μέχρις ᾅδου κατελήλυθας ζητῶν.

The substitution of Eros for Adam is at once paganizing and eroticizing, and in the next line Elytis equates the conqueror of Hades with the pagan image of the 'Prince of Lilies'. But in this image (the well known Minoan fresco from Knossos) the narrator sees himself depicted (ζωγραφιζόμουν). Thus, through the intermediate term of the 'Prince of Lilies', he has appropriated once again the functions of Christ, this time as conqueror of Hades and saviour of Adam/Eros.[191]

After the narrator's repeated appropriations of Christ in this and the previous Psalm, he now proceeds to imitate the form of a number of Christ's utterances (70:13-18):

Στὸν ἀσβέστη τώρα τοὺς ἀληθινούς μου Νόμους
κλείνω καὶ ἐμπιστεύομαι.
Μακάριοι, λέγω, οἱ δυνατοὶ ποὺ ἀποκρυπτογραφοῦνε τὸ
"Ασπιλο.
Γι' αὐτῶν τὰ δόντια ἡ ρόγα ποὺ μεθᾶ,
στῶν ἡφαιστείων τὸ στῆθος καὶ στὸ κλῆμα τῶν παρθένων.
'Ιδοὺ ἂς ἀκολουθήσουνε τὰ βήματά μου!

The lines beginning Μακάριοι, obviously approximate the formula of the Beatitudes, and in particular the variant form of the first and eighth in Matthew's version:

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ

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191 When Αὐτός of «'Η Γένεσις» reappears in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν», he too is associated with the defeat of Hades (8.3:14). He is hailed as Ποιητής (83:3), clearly both 'Creator' and 'Poet': structually paired with the female figure to whom Elytis' Χαιρετισμοί are addressed (76:17—77:10; compare 83:5-18). Αὐτός displaces Christ as she displaces the Panagia, but he transcends Christian dualism being both 'Death' and 'Life' (83:5:. Compare 70:20-21, where 'Life' is the gift of 'Death').

> βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
>
> μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.[192]

However, Elytis' 'Blessed [are] the strong [*or* powerful]' clearly challenges the spirit of Jesus' sayings, which celebrate 'the meek'[193] as well as 'the poor in spirit' and 'those who are persecuted'. The values of the Beatitudes are challenged not only by the celebration of 'the strong', but also by the substitution of erotic images for 'the kingdom of heaven', or the various heavenly rewards of the other Beatitudes (compare the earlier substitution of Eros for Adam).

Though not derived from the Beatitudes, Elytis' parenthetic λέγω points to a characteristic of Jesus' speech in all four Gospels. Innumerable sayings are prefaced by the words ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν or one of several variants. This phrase, together with the variants ἀμὴν λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν and λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν, occurs in a passage closely following the Beatitudes in which Jesus reviews, refines and, in some cases contradicts, elements of the Mosaic Law.[194] The repeated formula, 'You have heard that it was said [. . .] But I say to you', followed by a reformulation of the law or commandment in question, might be linked to Elytis' procedure in imitating the form of the Beatitudes while challenging their substance.

The preface to Jesus' refining of Mosaic Law is reworked by Elytis in reference to the narrator's 'true Laws'. Jesus says,

> Μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον· οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι.

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[192] Matthew 5.3, 10.

[193] Matthew 5.5.

[194] Matthew 5.17-48.

The narrator speaks of entrusting his Laws, like corpses, to the destructive power of lime, and yet he refers to them as 'true', reflecting the paradoxical aspect of Jesus' discourse which reaffirms the Mosaic Laws while demonstrating their inadequacy.

A final imitative gesture is evident in the expression ἄ ς ἀκολουθήσουνε τὰ βήματά μου, recalling Jesus' repeated command ἀκολούθει μοι,[195] or more precisely the third-person imperative of the saying,

> εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἐλθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθείτω μοι.[196]

The introductory 'Ιδού (before Elytis' ἄς ἀκολουθήσουνε) is, in the Gospels, more a characteristic of the Evangelists' narrative style than of the sayings of Jesus; and certainly it plays no part in the Sermon on the Mount which Psalm XVIII clearly has in its sights. It takes the reader back, rather, to the highly appropriative 'Ιδοὺ ἐγώ with which «Τὰ Πάθη» opens. Though doubt might remain about Elytis' awareness of 'Ιδοὺ ἐγώ as the hallmark of divine utterance in the Septuagint, there can be no doubt that his appropriation to the narrator in Psalm XVIII of various characteristics of Jesus' sayings was conscious and deliberate, associated as these appropriations are with the unmistakable assumption of the place of Jesus in the triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and in his departure from the world, and of Jesus' role as conqueror of Hades and Saviour.

After 'Let them follow in my footsteps', the opening line about the 'far country' is repeated, and with the verb πορεύομαι the narrator's self-presentation in AE ends. The remaining eight lines of Psalm XVIII and the whole of «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» are devoid of the first person singular.

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[195] Matthew 9.9; also twice in Mark, three times in Luke and once in John.

[196] Matthew 16.24. Compare Mark 8.34, Luke 9.23 and John 12.26.

Nevertheless, the theme of the displacement of Christ by the narrator is not quite exhausted, though the remaining examples of it are, necessarily, more indirect.[197]

The last line of «Τὰ Πάθη» (70:27),

ΑΞΙΟΝ ΕΣΤΙ τὸ τίμημα,

must be understood to refer primarily to the price paid by the narrator through the sufferings (πάθη) he has endured and now recounted, and secondarily, perhaps, to the sufferings of the Greek people (the secondary theme of «Τὰ Πάθη»). In this line, however, Elytis condenses a verse from the Apocalypse in which Christ's death is seen as a price paid to ransom mankind. An angel has asked,

τίς ἄξιός ἐστιν ἀνοῖξαι τὸ βιβλίον [. . .];

But 'no one in heaven or on earth' is 'found worthy to open the scroll'. Then the Lamb appears, 'standing as though it had been slain', and the 'four living creatures' and the 'twenty-four elders' who are around the throne of God now 'sing a new song, saying',

ἄξι<u>ος εἶ</u> λαβεῖν τὸ βιβλίον καὶ ἀνοῖξαι τὰς σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐσφάγης καὶ <u>ἠγόρασας</u> τῷ Θεῷ ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ αἵματί σου.

A chorus of angels then takes up the strain, singing

Ἄξιόν ἐστι τὸ ἀρνίον.[198]

Given the many forceful appropriations by which the narrator displaces

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197 In addition to the instances discussed below, a final displacement of Christ (by Αὐτός, the narrator's alter ego) occurs in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» (see p.354 n.191).

198 Revelation 5.2-12.

Christ in «Τὰ Πάθη», and particularly in Psalms XVII and XVIII, there seems no need for hesitation in proposing that in the line Ἄξιον ἐστί τὸ τίμημα Elytis alludes to this passage from the Apocalypse, effectively equating the sufferings of the narrator (the 'price' paid in «Τὰ Πάθη») with the sacrificial death of Christ as registered on the cosmic scale of the Apocalypse. Indeed, what more appropriate way to conclude 'The Passion'?

The phrases ἄξιος εἶ and ἄξιόν ἐστι from the Apocalypse cited above, together with ἄξιος εἶ, Κύριε from the same context,[199] constitute the only NT uses of ἄξιος as a term of praise addressed to Christ or God the Father. This passage from the Apocalypse must be the origin of all later usages of the phrase ἄξιόν ἐστι as an expression of praise, as in the two liturgical texts whose relation to the title of the poem was discussed in §4.2.[200] The phrase ἄξιον ἐστί first occurs in the poem in the last line of «Τὰ Πάθη» where, as I have shown, it is connected with the Apocalypse. It is, therefore, at least conceivable that Elytis first became aware of the poetic possibilities of this phrase through his reading of the Apocalypse rather than the liturgical texts of the *Synekdemos*.[201]

«Το Δοξαστικόν» has been discussed in relation to the Benedicite in terms of its substitution of all the elements of 'this world' for God as the object of praise.[202] Ἄξιον ἐστί is the key phrase through which this praise of the world is articulated. When this phrase is related to its origin in the Apocalypse, the case for interpreting the strategy of «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» as the substitution of the phenomenal world for the God of Christianity is strengthened; for the linguistic appropriation in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» is seen to encompass not only the OT 'Song of the Three

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199 Revelation 4.11.

200 See pp.279-80.

201 Elytis' keen interest in the Apocalypse is shown by his publication (1985a) of a translation of it.

202 See pp.290-93.

Holy Children' but also the very core of the Christian vision of ultimate reality. The praise of Christ as the Lamb of the Apocalypse (ἄξιόν ἐστι τὸ ἀρνίον) is a prelude to the opening of the seven seals, the consequent unleashing of forces that destroy the earth, the final triumph over Death and Hades, and the appearance of a new heaven and a new earth. All of this is effectively abolished in «Τὸ Δοξαστικόν» and replaced with a vision of this earth, which, with all its unresolvable contradictions, is sufficient for the poet.

4.7 Conclusion

The challenge to the Bible implicit in the opening words of AE becomes increasingly evident as the poem develops. It is not the Bible alone which Elytis challenges, but along with it the whole body of Orthodox liturgical texts. The title of the poem, the titles of its three main constituent parts, and the division of the central part into 'Psalms', 'Odes' and 'Readings' all announce the poem's relation to the Orthodox tradition. Elytis appropriates the names of Biblical and liturgical texts and genres, imitates the structure of an Orthodox service in «Τὰ Πάθη», Biblical style in the Readings, and liturgical metrics in his Odes; but even as he does so he contests both Christian belief and Christian morality. The contestation is, it is true, largely indirect, made explicit only in the call to replace the Cross by the narrator's own symbol, the condemnation of the Church's morality in the Sixth Reading, and the narrator's 'revolt against God' in Psalms XV and XVI and Ode iv. The 'God' in question has a distinctly OT character, and neither the Panagia nor Christ is anywhere the subject of the poem. Christianity is challenged partly through its virtual exclusion from the subject matter of a poem which makes such extensive use of Christian language. Biblical and liturgical language that in its original context refers to Christ is extensively appropriated: to the Greek people, to Lefteris, and above all to the narrator himself and his alter ego, Αὐτός. In appropriating the ascended majesty of Christ, his glory and his authority in commandment and judgement, Elytis takes the displacement of Christ by the poet beyond anything attempted— though perhaps not beyond anything envisaged— by Sikelianos.

5

General conclusion

In the Introduction I indicated that the three phases which Eliot discerned in the relation of the English novel to the Christian faith might also be applied to modern Greek poetry. My suggestion was that the work of Palamas and Sikelianos belonged to the second phase, in which the faith is no longer taken for granted but contested; that of Elytis to the third, in which, in Eliot's terms, Christianity is regarded as an anachronism. For Palamas and Sikelianos, even though they reject Christian doctrine, Christianity remains a living source of poetic ideas; while for Elytis it is simply a vein, however rich a vein, of poetic language.

For Palamas, as for the young Sikelianos, Christ serves as the embodiment of ideal beauty. Sikelianos' poetry still speaks of, and to, divinities in the language of praise and devotion; and, though the divinities of his imagination are essentially pagan, he assimilates the Panagia to his universal goddess, who is also Mother Nature, and Christ to Dionysus (arguably the key figure in the works of Sikelianos), while Baptism and Communion serve as metaphors for his poetry. In Elytis' *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* there is a 'revolt' against an implacable OT God, but no positive presence of the sacraments, sacred figures or sacred narratives of Christianity; and the appropriated elements of Biblical and liturgical texts are transposed into contexts more remote from Christianity than is generally the case with his predecessors. Elytis is, we might say, merely salvaging items of value— architectonics, metrics, metaphors— from the ruins of Christianity, plundering the tomb of a dead God.

What all three poets seize on, above all, is the poetry of the ecclesiastical texts: metaphorical and sonorous language, the powerful narratives of suffering and glory. Where doctrine, and particularly moral doctrine, appears in the poetry it is usually because the poet contests it.

I propose now to review the various ways in which these three poets, more or less systematically, contest the beliefs and values of Christianity even as they pervasively appropriate its language; and then to indicate how, as one moves from Palamas through Sikelianos to Elytis, the contestation of beliefs and values becomes secondary, displaced by a contest (or 'agon' in Bloom's terms) between the poet's work and the sacred texts, on the one hand, and, on the other, between the poetic ego and the sacred personae.

In Palamas I noted a relative lack of interest in the figure of Christ and a tendency to focus on the Virgin Mary and other female figures of the Gospels. Palamas' adaptations of liturgical characterizations of the Virgin show a systematic distortion, through which incarnational reference of the imagery is removed or obscured, divorcing the Virgin from her role in the Christian *economia*, the basis of her exalted position in the Orthodox tradition. Taking the liturgical expression ἐκ σοῦ ἡ δρόσος ἀπέσταξε, for example (where σοῦ denotes the Virgin and ἡ δρόσος Christ), Palamas has the emperor of the *Φλογέρα* address the Virgin herself as Δροσιά, declaring her to be the one who overcomes the heat of paganism (p.93). As an independent, goddess-like figure she becomes for Palamas a more appropriate counterpart to Athena, whose place she has taken in the Parthenon. Yet she remains recognizably and unquestionably the Panagia, worshipped by a Christian emperor who celebrates her victory over paganism. I have shown that, contrary to what has often been supposed, the *Φλογέρα* proposes no fusion of the Panagia with Athena (let alone Aphrodite), but instead sees them as diametrically opposed, representing two incompatible value systems.

The conflict between the values of ancient Greece and Christianity

was evidently very much alive for Palamas, and is dramatized in the *Φλογέρα*. The emperor represents the tradition of Christian nationalism inherited from Byzantium, while the Flute and other voices represent the ancient world, attacking the Panagia for the very things for which the emperor praises her: the defeat of paganism and the Christianization of the Parthenon.

It is in connection with the Parthenon that the linguistic tension in the poem is at its highest. The flute characterizes the ancient world destroyed by the Panagia in terms of 'treasure stores of power, of joy, and art, and wisdom', clearly alluding to the words in which the Panagia herself is celebrated in the Akathistos Hymn (p.111). Employing a similar metaphor the Flute calls the Parthenon itself τοῦ καθάριου ὁ θησαυρός, echoing the phrase ἁγνείας θησαύρισμα addressed to the Panagia in the Akathistos Canon— and this in a passage which decries the disfigurement of the Parthenon by the 'blind eye and coarse hand of the Nazarene' (pp.100-101, 113-14).

There is no such conflict of cultures for Sikelianos, who, by contrast, explicitly identifies the Panagia with more than one ancient goddess. While the Panagia is the principal focus of Sikelianos' engagement with Christian material in such poems as *Ἡ Συνείδηση τῆς Πίστης*, *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ* and *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*, the balance is redressed by the early poems on Christ and some important later poems such as «Διόνυσος ἐπὶ λίκνῳ» and «Ἄγραφον», for Christ too is assimilated to the deities of ancient Greece. Through his all-pervasive syncretism, Sikelianos attempts to bridge the gap between the classical and Christian heritages; but the attempt involves a distortion: sweeping up Christianity into his Orphic and Dionysiac visions of the Greek soul, Sikelianos ignores, denies or blatantly rewrites those elements of Christianity which do not fit his vision, most notably the Crucifixion.

Sikelianos' failure to complete *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* is surely

indicative of the problematic nature of his project. He recounts at great length the early life of the Panagia, up to the time when she is about to give birth, but there is not a word about the Nativity itself. Beyond that he writes only about the childhood of Jesus and two incidents from the Ministry, both involving Jesus' relations with women. As it stands, *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων* could almost be said to be peripheral to Christianity, since it entirely avoids the central issues: the teaching of Christ, Incarnation and Redemption through the Passion and Resurrection. To know what Sikelianos might have made of these themes one must turn to other poems. Christ as teacher in «Ἄγραφον» is a species of poetic visionary; the new-born infant of «Διόνυσος ἐπὶ λίκνῳ» is 'my Dionysus and my Christ'; and the 'crucified' in a number of poems is either Dionysus ('Bacchus') or a Titan. This broad-brush syncretistic approach would never have worked in the context of the close engagement with the Gospels which Sikelianos presumably had in mind for the unwritten parts of *Πάσχα τῶν Ἑλλήνων*.

In the poem's treatment of the Panagia there are in fact only hints of syncretism. The boldest strokes are the introduction of ἁρματωμένος Ἔρως (though his role is not entirely clear) and the related eroticization of the Annunciation as a mating of God with a mortal— never quite made explicit, but hinted at through allusions to the NT Νυμφίος who comes in the night, and the OT God who passed close by Moses but would not reveal his face (pp.214-17). Otherwise, the main strategies of distortion are the evasion of specifically Jewish elements in the sources and the prominence given to the natural environment as the prime, almost the only, context of Mary's life once she is betrothed.

The eroticization of the Annunciation and of the other Maries' relations to Jesus in «Ἰησοῦς στὴ Βηθανία» and «Μαγδαληνή» is reminiscent of Palamas' eroticism in such poems as «Θυγατέρες τῆς Σιών». We may compare this to Elytis' use of Christian language in erotic

contexts and his inversion of the moral values of the Church, and note that all three poets show a distinct aversion to the Christian denigration of sexuality. And, though it is most explicit in Elytis (and Palamas sometimes equivocates), all three resist the Christian duality of matter and spirit, celebrating the world accessible to the senses and finding their supreme values embodied in it.

Like Palamas, Sikelianos makes little of the Panagia's role as Theotokos, even in the poems entitled «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου» and *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*. In Sikelianos the Panagia is either assimilated to the ancient deities, or to some wider, pantheistic concept of Mother Nature, or seen as an ideal image of woman in all her aspects. Only the last of these approaches is, broadly, within the Christian tradition.

Sikelianos' appropriations of Christian language are usually associated with appropriations of the principal personae of Christianity, Christ and the Panagia, and their transposition into contexts foreign, and even inimical, to the Biblical and liturgical texts on which he draws. One sees some of this in Palamas' occasional syncretism, but, for the most part, he does less violence to Christianity because he has less use for it. It is not the life of Christ or of the Virgin, but Christianity in the historical context of Byzantium which provides much of the subject matter of both the *Φλογέρα* and the *Δωδεκάλογος*: Christianity viewed, that is, through the beliefs and perceptions of the personae of these poems. The direct appropriation of Christ and other Biblical figures for the poet's own ideological or visionary purposes is less developed in Palamas than in Sikelianos, though there are important instances of this in «Θωμᾶς» and (slightly less direct because mediated through the Gypsy) in the *Δωδεκάλογος*. In «Θωμᾶς» Christ becomes a metaphor for the 'highest beauty' of the poet's vision, and Christ's sufferings a metaphor for the poet's anguish when he cannot believe in the reality of his own vision (§2.6). The Gypsy's declaration that his passage causes the 'plant that saves'

to 'blossom in the desert' implies, in terms of the verses of Isaiah to which it alludes, the assumption of divine functions (pp.68-9), and thus anticipates the more explicit appropriations of this type in Sikelianos and Elytis.

In Sikelianos' «Μάνα τοῦ Γιοῦ τοῦ 'Ανθρώπου» the poet subtly displaces Christ in an account of his own development which not only alludes to Luke's descriptions of the Christ-child growing 'in wisdom', but is carefully placed immediately after a paganized revision of the Annunciation. In *Μήτηρ Θεοῦ*, somewhat less subtly, the poet, through appropriations of Paul's language of the general resurrection at the Parousia, puts himself again in the place of Christ: for it is to him that the dead come (pp.192-5). Through the image of Christ as a fallen or wounded bird which the poet will raise to Helicon (pp.136-7, 189-91), Sikelianos makes the poet greater than Christ, the saviour of Christ, we might say. And his 'Fifth Gospel' is intended to convey a greater truth than the first four, as already in his youth he claimed to know better than the Evangelist John what it was that flowed from the wound in Christ's side (pp.157-9).

When one turns to Elytis' use of Christian language in *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί*, a significant difference from Sikelianos and Palamas is immediately apparent. Though allusions to Biblical and liturgical texts abound, nowhere is Christ or the Panagia or any other Biblical figure or incident the ostensible subject of the poem. There is no attempt to rewrite Christian texts in the manner of Sikelianos' 'Fifth Gospel' or Palamas' poems on the myrophores and Resurrection. Nor is there any syncretistic rewriting of the 'myth of Jesus', for ancient Greek mythology plays little part in the poem.

The Panagia, so prominent in the *Φλογέρα* and in many major poems of Sikelianos, is scarcely present in *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί*, and I have discussed that poem primarily in terms of the displacement of God and Christ by the narrator. This displacement is effected through the appropriation of elements of Biblical and liturgical language which in their

original context belong to Jehovah or Christ, and their application by the narrator to himself: ὁ διακαιότερος, μὲ δόξα θὰ περάσω, ὁ ἐρχόμενος (pp.340-41, 348-51). Behind this strategy lies, evidently enough, a fascination with the vocabulary and idioms of Biblical and liturgical texts and the poetic force of their imagery; but not that alone. The Bible and the liturgy are highly privileged texts, particularly in a culture like that of Greece which is still significantly less post-Christian than most European national cultures. Biblical and liturgical expressions, especially those applied to God, Christ and the Panagia, are obviously value-laden, and their appropriation implies the intent to import something of that value, to enhance the status of, in this case, Elytis' narrator in *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί*. To displace God is to attempt to appropriate some of the authority, centrality and even the grandeur of God: ν' ἀνεβῶ / στὸ γλαυκὸ τ' οὐρανοῦ — κι ἐκεῖ νὰ ἐξουσιάσω (p.335).

The fact that the narrator is so little distanced from Elytis himself may make the reader at times uncomfortable with this procedure. A number of Greek critics have avoided this problem by not analysing too closely what Elytis is doing in his use of Biblical and liturgical language and structures, or liturgical metrics. I have, I hope, demonstrated that the approach which sees Christ himself as frequently evoked in *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί*, and which regards the poem as essentially and easily compatible with Christianity, is untenable. In taking the language which asserts value or significance of Christ, the narrator is not sharing the stage with Christ but effectively elbowing him off it. In so far as *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* is a 'Fifth Gospel', it is a rewriting of the teaching rather than the life of Christ. But Elytis' gospel is a gospel of 'this world' and emphatically not of the 'kingdom of heaven'; and it represents a quite extraordinary privileging of the poetic ego.

The displacement of God or Christ by the poetic ego, occasionally evident in Palamas (influenced in this, no doubt, by Nietzsche), becomes an

important aspect of Sikelianos' poetic stance, where this is articulated through appropriations of Biblical and liturgical language. But in *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* Elytis takes this strategy much further than either of his predecessors (and his 'agon' with them— and especially with Sikelianos— can be observed at certain places in the poem). Indeed, the displacement of God and Christ by Elytis' narrator approaches the limits of what can be asserted through the distortion of Christian language without falling into absurdity or madness. And certainly no Greek poet in the forty years since the publication of *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί* has attempted to go beyond Elytis in this respect.

Appendix

Three uncollected poems by Palamas

ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΣ

'Ανάστασι κι' 'Αγάπη καὶ *Λαμπρή*
Κάθε καμπάνα χαρωπὰ σημαίνει
Καὶ ξημερών' ἡ 'μέρα, καὶ φορεῖ
Στολὴ μ' ἀστέρια κι' ἄνθη κεντημένη.

Κ' ἡ γῆ εὐμορφαίνει καὶ λαμποκοπᾷ.
'Ο ἄγγελος ποῦ ἦρθε νὰ κυλίσῃ
Τὴν πέτρ' ἀπὸ τὸ μνῆμα διασκορπᾷ
"Ολη τὴ λάμψι του, θαρρεῖς, 'ς τὴν κτίσι.

Καὶ μέσα 'ς τὴν καρδιά μου μυστικὰ
Νιώθω νὰ ξημερώνῃ μιὰν ἡμέρα
Μὲ κάλλη ἀκόμα πλέον μαγικὰ
'Απ' ὅσα εἶνε 'ς τὴ γῆ καὶ 'ς τὸν αἰθέρα.

'Ο ἔρως καὶ ἡ ἄνοιξι κ' ἡ νιότη
Φωλιάζουν μέσα μου, τρεῖς θησαυροί,
Καὶ 'ντύνουν τῆς καρδιᾶς μου τὴ γυμνότη
Μ' ἀνάστασι κι' ἀγάπη καὶ *λαμπρή*.

(Published in *Τὸ Ἄστυ*, 24 April 1888, p.4; signed Φλόρα Μυράμπελη.)

ΦΑΡΙΣΑΙΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΤΕΛΩΝΑΙ

Ἄνθρωποι δύο ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν προσεύξασθαι· ὁ εἷς Φαρισαῖος καὶ ὁ ἕτερος τελώνης.

(Εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Λουκᾶν)

Α΄

Λοιπόν: 'ς ἐκεῖνο τὸν παληὸ καιρὸ
Ποὺ ἔφεγγε 'ς τὴν πλάσι Θεὸς νέος,
'Ανέβηκαν ἀπάνου 'ς τὸ ἱερὸ
Ἕνας τελώνης κ' ἕνας Φαρισαῖος.

Ὁ Φαρισαῖος ἔχει γελαστὸ
Τὸ πρόσωπο, ψηλά 'χει τὸ κεφάλι,
Καὶ κράζει:
«Κύριε, Σ' εὐχαριστῶ,
Γιατὶ δὲν εἶμαι καθὼς εἶνε οἱ ἄλλοι !

»Μοῦ βρεχ' ἡ χάρη Σου κάθε ἀγαθό.
Κρατῶ μεσ' 'ς τ' ἀσημένια μου τὰ βρόχια
Ὅ,τι φαντάζομαι κι' ὅ,τι ποθῶ !
Γλεντῶ· μὰ δὲν ξεχάνω καὶ τὴ φτώχια !

»Ἔχω παλάτια καὶ χωριά, σωρούς,
Ταὶς λίραις κρύβω σὲ βαρειὰ ταμεῖα,
Γεύματα δίνω καὶ λαμπροὺς χορούς,
Καὶ κάπου κτίζω καὶ νοσοκομεῖα !

»Εἶμαι γενναῖος, δίκαιος, καλός.
Δὲν λείπω ἀπὸ τὴν ἐκκλησιά, νηστεύω,
Δὲν εἶμαι σὰν αὐτὸς ἁμαρτωλός.
Θεέ ! Σ' εὐχαριστῶ καὶ Σὲ πιστεύω !»

Β΄

Κι' ὁ ἄλλος ὁ τελώνης, ταπεινός.
Τὰ δάκρυά του τρέχουν στάλα στάλα.

«Θεέ ! τὸ ξέρω, εἶμαι οὐτιδανός,
Ξέρω πῶς ἔχω κρίματα μεγάλα . . . .

»Συγχώρησέ μου ἀπὸ τοὺς οὐρανοὺς
Τὰ κρίματά μου, πλήθη σὰν τὴν ἄμμο.
Εἶμ' ἄνθρωπος· ἀδύνατος ὁ νοῦς,
Κι' ὁ πειρασμὸς πολύς· τί νὰ Σοῦ κάμω;

»Πῶς νὰ μὲ ζήσῃ ὁ ψωρολουφὲς
Ποῦ πέρνω ἀπ' τὸ κουβέρνο ! θὰ ψοφοῦσα . . . .
Ἔχω παιδιά, γυναῖκα κι' ἀδερφαίς.
Μᾶς ἔπνιξ' ἡ ἀκρίβεια καὶ τὰ λοῦσα !

»Νά 'χω τὴν ἐξουσία μου μπροστὰ
Χίλια καλά, καὶ τοὺ πουλιοῦ τὸ γάλα,
Καὶ νὰ κρατῶ τὰ χέρια μου κλειστά !
Ἥμαρτον, Κύριε, μοὔπρεπε κρεμάλα !»

Ὁ Κύριος, τὸ ξέρουμε καλά,
Τοῦ Φαρισαίου ἐσφράγισε τὸ στόμα,
Καὶ τὸν τελώνη ἐσήκωσε ψηλά.

Γ′

Λοιπόν: καθὼς καὶ πρίν, καὶ τώρ' ἀκόμα

Οἱ Φαρισαῖοι τὴν ὥρα τους περνοῦν
Μὲ τὰ παχειὰ τὰ λόγια, κ' οἱ τελῶναι
Σουφρώνουν ἀδιάκοπα, πεινοῦν
Ἀχόρταστα, καὶ τρῶνε, τρῶνε, τρῶνε.

Ὅμως ἀλλάξαν 'λίγο οἱ καιροί.
Κι' ἂν δὲν πιστεύῃς, τρέχα εὐθὺς καὶ 'ρώτα.
— Ὁ Φαρισαῖος δὲν ἄλλαξε. — Μπορεῖ.
Ἀλλ' ὁ τελώνης δὲν εἶν' ὅπως πρῶτα !

Δὲν σκύβει, καθὼς τότε, ταπεινός,
Δὲν κλαίει, δὲ γονατίζει, δὲν χτυπιέται,
Φόβο, 'ντροπὴ δὲν ἔχει κανενός,

Κι' οὐδὲ καὶ τὸ Θεὸ πλιὰ συλλογιέται.

Κι' αὐτὸς μὲ γλῶσσα ψεύτρα καὶ τρανὴ
Φωνάζει μόνον ὅ,τι τοῦ συμφέρει,
Κι' ὅταν τόνε καθίσουν 'ς τὸ σ κ α μ ν ί .
Μιλεῖ σὰν νἆνε ἀθῶο περιστέρι !

Θεέ ! μὴ γελασθῇς ἄλλη φορὰ
'Απὸ τὴν καλοσύνη σου καὶ μόνη.
Χτύπα τὸ Φαρισαῖο 'ς τὰ γερά.
'Αλλὰ μὴ συγχωρῇς καὶ τὸν τελώνη !

(Published in *Τὸ Ἄστυ*, 19 June 1888, p.6; signed Φλόρα Μυράμπελη.)

ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΑΓΓΕΛΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΕΩΣ

Ἄγγελ', Ἐσὺ ποῦ ἀπὸ τὸ χιόνι
Ἔχεις λευκότερη στολή,
Κι' ἀπὸ τὴν ἀστραπὴ θαμπώνει
Τὸ μέτωπό σου πιὸ πολύ.

Ἐσὺ ποῦ ἦρθες νὰ κυλίσῃς
Τὴν πέτρα τοῦ Χριστοῦ κρυφὸς
Κ' ἔκαμες κ' ἔλαμψεν ἡ κτίσις
Σὰν ἀπὸ μύριων ἥλιων φῶς,

Σ τοῦ Παραδείσου τὴν αὐγή.
Ὦ Ἄγγελε, μὴ φεύγῃς, στάσου
Καὶ καρτεροῦν τὰ θαύματά σου
Κι' ἄλλοι νεκροὶ ἐδῶ ς τὴ γῆ !

Βαθειὰ κοιμοῦνται πεθαμμένες,
Μέσα στοὺς τάφους των κλεισταίς,
Πίστις κι' Ἀγάπη, δύο παρθέναις,
Θεὲς τῆς γῆς λαχταρισταίς.

Στάσου, καὶ κύλα τὸ λιθάρι,
Λύσε τὸν ὕπνο τὸ βαθύ,
Ὁ κόσμος ὅλος φῶς καὶ χάρι
Μαζῆ μ' αὐταὶς ν' ἀναστηθῇ !

Στάσου καὶ κύλα τὸ λιθάρι
Ποῦ κλεῖ τοὺς τάφους των βαρειά,
Ν' ἀνθίσῃ ὁ κόσμος καὶ νὰ πάρῃ
Νιότη, ζωή, παρηγοριά !

Καὶ τῶν λαῶν τὴν πέτρα κύλα
Ν' ἀναστηθῇ ἡ Ἐλευθεριά,
Καὶ διῶξε τὴ Σκλαβιὰ τὴ σκύλα,
Διῶξε ἀπὸ κάθε γῆς μεριά.

(Published in *Ἐτήσιον Ἡμερολόγιον 1888*, ed. Κ.Φ. Σκόκος, pp.270-71, together with «Εἰς τὸ λεύκωμα τῆς δεσποινίδος», under the heading Δύο ποιήματα ὑπὸ Κωστῆ Παλαμᾶ.)

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